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Learning Through Privilege: My Teaching and Educational Journey

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Learning Through Privilege: My Teaching and Educational Journey

Grace Birkenbeuel

Claremont Graduate University

February 12, 2018

Dedication

To my students, never give up on your dreams and always trust your own strengths. To my family and friends, your constant support has driven me to become the best teacher and make you proud. To Jack, thank you for being by my side in spirit as we tackle our professional careers. Your support and understanding has helped guide me during this process. To my parents, thank you for being such supportive and encouraging parents. You pushed me to follow my dreams, and I am forever grateful for your kindness, selflessness, hospitality, and love. Because of your emotional support and consistent meals throughout these past 18 months, my success as a future teacher has become attainable. To Josh, thank you for sharing my happiness and excitement, catching my tears, showing me new perspectives, tolerating my constant mood swings, and embracing the spectacular, the good, the bad, and the ugly. This ethnography would not have been possible without your unwavering patience, love, support and encouragement.

Abstract

This ethnography traces my journey teaching kindergarten in the Pico Union neighborhood in Los Angeles. Its purpose is to understand the macro and micro levels of the community to inform my teaching practices and support my students and families. On a micro-level, I conducted case studies on three specific students. Data analysis of in-home interviews, personal interactions, and assessments allowed me to create action plans to best support these students' academic, social, and emotional needs. On a macro level, I studied my students' environments: community, school, and classroom. Attending community events, learning about my school's mission, and reflecting on my classroom culture and expectations, I internalized how students' environments plays a role in their education. By analyzing whole class and individual student data and reflecting on my own development, I grew as a professional educator and became an effective and socially just teacher.

Keywords: social justice, privilege, effective teaching, community, Pico Union

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Preface

How can I become an effective teacher that intentionally teaches her class through a social justice lens? As I entered the Claremont Graduate Program, I set out learn how to be an effective and equitable teacher. My ethnography traces in detail my journey as a kindergarten teacher working at an elementary public charter school in downtown Los Angeles, and centers on my experience as an intern teacher displaying my process, reflection, and shift in perspective as a first-year teacher.

In the following ethnography, I reflect on my own educational experiences and come to recognize the privileges and educational advantages that helped shape my journey to become a teacher. The majority of my study focuses on three students whose homes I visited while learning more about their immediate families and their lives outside of school. These in-depth case studies provided insight into my students' assets and needs and enabled me to become a more supportive and knowledgeable teacher. Additionally, studying the community, school, and classroom environment, has strengthened my drive to be an ally for my students, and has opened my eyes to the need for social justice and strong education for all members of community. By embracing my students and their identities, it is my job as their teacher to connect with them and support them in their educational journeys.

Analytical, reflective, and personal, this ethnography highlights how my students and I have grown throughout the course of this school year. My own realizations about being an effective teacher and learning to recognize my strengths and weaknesses are analyzed in this ethnography. Challenges and setbacks are assets in the journey to becoming a better teacher, and without this failure, growth is unattainable. My growth stemmed from overcoming these challenges with the support of my colleagues, family, and advisors. Without my own strong role models, I would not be able to demonstrate this support for my students and help them grow to their fullest potential.

Part A: Who am I and why do I want to be a teacher?

Pasadena—known for the infamous Rose Parade and private schools. With upwards of 50 private schools in the city, Pasadena is an ideal place to raise a family. Growing up here, I was fortunate to attend and be educated in two private schools, however, unbeknownst to me at the time, I lived in a bubble. My life experiences centered around my schooling in a predominately white, affluent community. Education is a priority in my family; our financial stability provided me with endless resources. If I struggled in school, my parents could afford tutors and outside resources to enhance my success. Not until high school did I realize that my experiences at private school did not reflect those of other students struggling to receive a mediocre education in the Pasadena public school system. I was ignorant to the huge educational and wealth disparity in private and public schools until high school. A sense of guilt overwhelms me every time I think about every opportunity I have been given instead of earned compared to others who have struggled daily without these advantages. Instead of ignoring the issue, I have decided to take action. All children should have the opportunity to receive a high quality education regardless of their class, race, gender or sexuality. Now recognizing the disadvantages that others face, I hope to create a classroom that provides opportunities for all of my students to succeed. Over the last few years, reflection and determination have become a daily part of my life, and my story of becoming a teacher is greatly influenced by my experiences living and teaching in Pasadena. This ethnography highlights my journey to overcome personal insecurities and to continue my advocacy by becoming a passionate teacher for social justice.

My Journey

Looking down at the worksheet Mrs. Fletcher passed out, I silently read, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” The answer popped into my head without any hesitation—teacher. As a second grader who spent most of her free time playing in the mud and setting up pretend

classrooms, I was confident at the age of eight of my destiny to be a teacher. My parents encouraged every aspect of my learning, and provided space for me to create my own classrooms at home. With my animals and little brother as my students, I already had ample amounts of teaching practice under my belt. Meeting every day after school, I instructed my “students” in math, reading, spelling, and writing. In reality, I learned the most from these sessions, repetitively writing out times tables and reading books to my students. So many of my role models were teachers both in and out of the classroom, and I wanted to be just like them.

I was lucky enough to truly love all of my elementary school teachers, and every day I looked forward to attending class. At this point in my educational career, I loved everything about school— my classmates, my teachers, recess, and the work. My love for reading developed gradually in my younger years as a student. Although not an avid reader, when I discovered a book that resonated with me, I couldn’t put it down. Books transported me into another world. At a young age, my parents read me picture books and chapter books before bed each night, instilling the value of reading. My love for reading continued in first grade when I was assigned a fifth-grade reading buddy. This collaboration with an older student made me feel special, and I always wanted to show off my reading skills to her. I now enjoy and crave reading a good book whenever I have time. This type of modeling, collaboration, and love for reading is something that I want to bring into my classroom as a kindergarten teacher.

Enrolled in the private, preparatory school Polytechnic (Poly) at a young age, the competition amongst my peers, and the pressures to excel became engrained in my everyday life. This competition permeated inside and outside of the classroom. Wrapped up in the constant comparisons to my peers and their privileges, I began to lose sight of my own true identity. And eventually, as time progressed, my love for school diminished. In fact, I began to dislike school

all together. Middle school became a place of constant fear and judgment, and I didn't feel safe or welcome socially or academically.

Frequently faced with bullying and judgment during adolescence, I lost track of my identity before it could fully form. Conversations revolved around materialism and wealth, and although I was also from an affluent family, I never understood why I couldn't relate to my peers. My dad grew up in El Monte with little money. He paved the way for our family, so that my brother and I could attend private schools. Both my mom and dad taught me the value of working hard, and how this dedication can lead to success. Fortunately for me, my parents also taught me to value people for their inner qualities instead of on their outer appearance. These values helped shape me into a compassionate and devoted woman and teacher.

My insecurities as an adolescent however, only manifested more with age. At the start of sixth grade, 30 new people entered our class, many of which were my good friends from soccer and outside of school. While trying to merge my soccer friends and school friends into one, I somewhere got left behind. They formed new bonds with one another, purposefully excluding me from their newly formed group. Anger, sadness, and confusion overcame me as I navigated my way through middle school looking for new confidants.

Academically my voice grew silent, as I became overwhelmed by the cruelty and judgment from my peers. In eighth grade, I continued to suffer from the constant exclusion and bullying from the popular boys and girls in my class. Their entitlement empowered them to snicker and immediately shut down anyone with differing opinions while also ostracizing us from our peers. Thus, when I tried to participate in class, a lump formed in my throat, and I felt as if I would rather be dead than contribute to the conversation. Being silenced in the classroom made me lose all confidence, and eventually I realized that silence was the way I could get through school without being noticed.

I did learn the power of active listening. Through this active listening I gained insight into other people's opinions, and recognized subtle emotional cues revealed by my peers. This active listening is now one of my personal strengths, and has helped me in getting to know my friends, family, students, and strangers. By asking questions, I have realized people are more than willing to open up and talk about themselves.

This silence however plagued me all throughout middle school. I vividly remember my eighth grade Spanish teacher attempting to provide alternate forms of participation and assessments where I would not have to contribute to class. However, she only made the problem worse and never actually helped me get over my fear and step out of my comfort zone. Overwhelmed by this fear of speaking in class, I struggled to complete our mandatory class presentations. Instead of learning the skills to cope with my anxiety of speaking in class, my discomfort consumed me, and I became even more ashamed of my failures losing all self-confidence in the classroom.

Looking back, I wish my teachers had provided me with opportunities and given me the tools and skills to confidently voice my opinions in class. According to the cognitive apprenticeship model, teachers must follow six phases when teaching (Fisher & Frey, 2011, p.12). If my teacher "modeled expert behavior" and "scaffold the weaker students' emerging understandings" (Fisher & Frey, 2011), then she could have recognized my struggles as a student, worked with me to understand the material, and helped me feel confident interjecting my opinions during class.

Understanding the anxiety that comes with speaking and participating in class, I can relate to my students and recognize when they feel afraid to speak up. I will create a safe classroom environment for all of my students to take risks, voice their opinions, and ask questions. Connecting with and understanding others is one of my greatest strengths. With my experience working in the classroom, I have found that by getting to know my students on a personal level,

they are more willing to open up with me and their peers. According to the New Teacher Survival Guide: Planning, it is important to get to know your students and know where your students are in their schooling. Knowing my students' interests and understanding my students' abilities is extremely important in engaging them right off the bat. If the material introduced is above their skill level, then they are unable to retain or learn any new information. I will design purposeful, age appropriate lessons. I plan to introduce many community building activities to lay the foundation for my students to get to know and feel comfortable with each other.

I recognize now that the certain methods my teachers used in the classroom did not fit my own learning styles. Eric Gardner posits that there are nine different types of intelligence; individuals differ in the strength of these intelligences; and each student learns in different ways and at different rates. (Purefoy, D., 2009) Recognizing the differences in student's learning styles is essential to my success as a teacher. In my first years of teaching, I want to learn strong techniques for designing clear, purposeful lessons that are attainable for all of my students. The structure of my own schooling revolved around power-points and tests as assessment. I however, learn best when interacting with my environment through hands-on experiences. I also retain information through visuals and direct interactions with my peers. Each student learns differently, so in my lessons, I will provide different learning opportunities and assessments for students. This will allow for equitable opportunities where all students can explore their learning strengths and multiple intelligences.

The connection to one's teacher is fundamental to a student's success in a classroom. One inspirational eighth grade teacher, Mr. Caragher, believed in my abilities as a student, held me to high standards, and challenged me every day in class. Mr. Caragher's class culminated with each student writing a persuasive speech on any topic of his or her choice. I had never received such freedom on an assignment, and I loved it. As a young teen living in Los Angeles, I felt enormous

pressure to look like the ideal woman. My speech addressed the topic of unrealistic portrayals of women in the media and its effects on young women and their body image.

With Mr. Caragher's support and to my surprise, I landed a spot as one of six speech contest finalists who delivered their speeches to the entire middle school. Not one to speak up in class, public speaking terrified me. However, while delivering my speech, I channeled my nerves and spoke confidently, continuously made eye contact with the audience and judges, and delivered my speech without hesitation. My voice mattered as I commanded the attention of my audience. In that moment, I no longer felt silenced, but empowered. I realized that people's opinions of me shouldn't matter, and success awaited me, if I put my mind to it. Mr. Caragher taught me the value of hard work, and he helped me gain confidence in my own abilities as a student.

This project broadened my ideas of my own learning. As Flores (2018) explained in class, the average student retains 90% of information when the student teaches this information to their peers. High expectations are set when students enter the role of teacher. Not only do they need to master the material they teach, but they also impact their fellow classmates' comprehension of the material. If they are unable to clearly teach this information, their classmates' learning will suffer too. Participating and succeeding in the speech contest, I felt empowered with confidence and realized that I could have a positive impact in the classroom.

With new found confidence and belief in my own voice, I realized that I could not let other people negatively influence my education and learning. At the age of fourteen, I approached my parents with hesitation, and told them "I do not want to stay at this school. I need a new educational environment." All of my worry and dread disappeared when they responded, "Grace, we will support you in whatever decision you make." Their unwavering support allowed me to take my education into my own hands and find a school that would accept me for my true self.

Entering a new chapter in my life, I began my high school career at the all-girls school, Westridge. Not worrying about impressing boys every day, I focused more on my education. I recall my junior English teacher, Ms. Hatkoff speaking to us on one of the first days of class. She told us that she never thought she would be a teacher because she did not like speaking up in class as a student. That second-grade voice in my head suddenly resurfaced screaming, “Me too!” I thought to myself that maybe I could still be a teacher after all. I had pushed the idea away thinking, “How could someone unable to speak up in class command a classroom for an entire year?” Ms. Hatkoff’s comment ignited a small spark in me that continued to flicker and grow throughout my educational career.

Ms. Hatkoff stood out in my educational career as one of my most relatable teachers, and she had high expectations of us and challenged us daily. By sharing information about her own life, she made me feel more comfortable opening up in class. She regularly met with us one on one to assist us with the progress of our essays, and allowed us the freedom to occasionally choose our own paper topics. As an educator, I want to support my students in a one on one setting, and I want to incorporate this freedom of choice into my classroom. Coincidentally, Rebecca Hatkoff is now my Pre-Teaching Lead Teacher at CGU, and I cannot wait to make use of her guidance again.

In high school, I reclaimed my voice and began to take more risks in the classroom with the support of my teachers. I gained confidence in myself realizing the importance of hard work and dedication to my education. As a student, one of my greatest strengths is acknowledging my weaknesses. With years of practice, I have learned to step out of my comfort zone when it comes to participation. My work in the classroom has opened my eyes to the importance of active participation. Remembering my weaknesses as a student will help me identify which of my own

students are struggling. Their struggles will become my struggles as we work to overcome these limitations together—as both the teacher and the student.

Upon completing high school, I stepped into the unknown of college. Although I invested more in my own educational successes during high school, I still had not fully grasped the true gravity of education until college. Fortunate enough to attend private schools for my entire educational career, my parents placed the highest emphasis on my education and always supported my dreams as a student. College was always a given in my family, but during high school I solely went through the motions of school, not linking the importance of a strong education to one's life successes until I attended and graduated from Whitman College.

My most challenging and inspiring teacher in college, Professor Clearfield, turned my world upside when I received my first and only F on my first graded paper. Frantically confused by this horrible grade, I met with her to discuss my paper. She emphasized that the work I produced was not college level writing. She knew that I could do better, and she was right. I had relied on my prior knowledge of the paper topic, and did not put in any effort to form a well written paper. Meeting with her every few weeks, I asked for study tips, asked questions, inquired about my progress, and truly developed an interest to learn more outside of class. With her help, I learned to believe in myself as a student. She believed in my ability as a student, and didn't accept anything less than my best work. From her class I learned that in order to succeed in a classroom, I cannot rely on extrinsic motivations of getting an A to boost my GPA. Instead I must discover my own intrinsic motivations to learn new information and succeed.

Setting expectations early on in a class is extremely important to a student's success. According to Fisher and Frey (2011), "When teachers have high expectations for students, communicate those expectations, and provide the support necessary to achieve them, student performance soars." (p. 3). As evidenced from my stories about my teacher role models, I thrived

as a student when I was held accountable and challenged to succeed. My teachers knew my capabilities as a student and accepted nothing less. When my teachers explicitly communicated their high expectations, I always wanted to turn in my best work. Their high expectations made a lasting impression on my experiences and school, and made these teachers my favorite and most memorable.

Learning the value of hard work from my teachers and parents, I have thrived in and out of the classroom by incorporating this value in my personal and academic life. As a teacher, I never give up on my students, hold them to high standards, and strive to be the best teacher that I can be. At times though, my hard work gets the best of me as I take on more projects than I can handle. When I become overwhelmed, I do not produce my best work. As a first-year teacher, I want to be judicious in managing my time and responsibilities, so I can always give my best energy and support to my students.

After sophomore year in college, I applied to my first official summer job. Little did I know, my work as a camp counselor would ignite the beginning of my career as an educator. Working with a group of 12 eight-year-old girls all summer, I was constantly on the move. The true magic of camp arose during free time when the girls' love for exploration flourished. Creativity sparked while we hunted for fairies and created secret forts. I felt so comfortable relating with my campers. Some people shy away from kids, but I was drawn to their open mindedness, goofiness, and self-expression. I wanted to be the best role model for my campers. To my surprise, I also learned a lot from them that summer. These girls taught me about communication, problem-solving, taking risks, and enjoying adventure. These camp experiences enriched all of us.

When I returned to school for my junior year, I declared psychology as my major because Whitman college did not offer an education major or minor. In college, psychology classes relating to education allowed me to learn about teaching children through a theoretical

standpoint. While taking classes specific to child and adolescent development, and children in poverty, I learned more about the world of inequality in education. Children living in poverty are exposed to more adverse social and physical environmental conditions (Evans, 2004). This exposure to multiple environmental risks greatly impacts their academic achievement in schools. Inevitably, my students' lack of resources will arise while working in the classroom. Awareness to my students' living circumstances will be critical when providing support to my students when they struggle in class. By altering lessons and homework assignments, I can cater to my students' needs and provide them with the resources they need to succeed in the classroom.

Not only did I academically learn of the disadvantages of low-income children, but I also learned through observation as I immersed myself in volunteer activities working in low income schools. I read to kindergarteners, mentored elementary students, and tutored at risk high school students. Through these experiences, I spoke individually with students and listened to their hardships, and discovered that their motivation to become first generation college students only drove them to work harder. My exposure to children in low-income schools was enlightening and made me realize my own good fortune with a privileged and quality education.

Learning about the huge achievement gap in our school system, I wanted to understand how this could potentially be mitigated. Consequently, I enrolled in a summer study abroad program in South Africa that focused on education and social change. This was the first hands-on, experiential opportunity that I had working in low income schools for an extended period of time. While living in homestays, I immersed myself in the South African culture, and quickly grew to understand that a lack of resources may be limiting, but should not define an individual. I experienced the importance of communication and relationships within the South African culture, and recognized similar traits to my own family. South Africans place so much value on family and friends. The bonds we create with others are extremely impactful, and in my

classroom, I foster meaningful interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships among my students and their parents.

During my study abroad in South Africa, I visited classrooms, both private and public, but learned the most from my daily classroom visits to a primary school in a low-income neighborhood in Durban. As I accompanied the children in their classrooms, I noticed eager hands raised in a classroom filled with 40 children, three crammed to a desk. Excited to participate and learn, the students could barely sit in their seats. “What are your goals for the future?” I ask. Dreaming big they exclaim, “Doctor!” “Singer!” “Lawyer!” Students arrived to school with hungry stomachs and tattered clothes. Poverty overwhelms them, but does not deter them from a hunger for learning. It’s clear however that, as in the U.S., wealth disparity amongst South Africans affects access to quality education. Access to good education should not just be for the privileged, but rather a right that is available to all children. This experience most certainly confirmed my passion for working with kids, particularly those who are disadvantaged.

I constantly grapple with my work abroad, and my impact on each child I meet. The past two years, I chaperoned 20 high school students to Jinotega, Nicaragua to teach low-income children English for a week. In both Nicaragua and South Africa, I lived in the communities in which I was working. I cherished the connections I made with community members, but I questioned whether the warmth I felt was reciprocated. I did not want to be a white foreigner who came to work with students for a short stint. I have discovered that consistency is crucial to a child’s success, and these programs do not lend themselves to the consistency and connections that allow these students to succeed to their full potential. In working with a class every day, I can give students a sense of routine and comfort, allowing them to flourish and take risks.

Working abroad opened my eyes to the global scale of wealth and educational disparities not only in South Africa, but also in the United States. These experiences answered many questions

as to whether or not I wished to be a teacher, so upon graduating college, I continued to pursue my passion working in the educational world. I began by teaching activity based classes to young children ages five to eight during the summer school. Quickly learning the importance of flexibility, I centered my lessons around movement, developed conflict resolution skills, instructed using clear communication, and fostered a safe classroom for students to become autonomous and responsible leaders and problem solvers.

Not having experience working in a classroom made my options more limited as a non-credentialed teacher. Fortunately, my former grade school, Poly, developed a Teaching Fellow program that utilizes recent college graduates who want to pursue a desire to teach. Thrilled about this opportunity, I applied, and Poly offered me a unique two-year position. Diverse and far-reaching, my responsibilities included coaching, chaperoning outdoor activities, advising, and coordinating community outreach classes. My major role was working in a sixth-grade history class alongside an experienced teacher. Through class observation, designing tests, and creating lesson plans, I learned the importance of flexibility and dynamic teaching. Teaching individual units and working with students one on one provided my greatest personal, impactful opportunity. Connecting with my students by showing interest in their lives and engaging with their parents were critical experiences for me.

At Poly, parents and families are very involved, reinforcing that family support is just as important to a child's success as teacher support. When parents from both high and low SES families are given enough support and resources, their financial situation will not impact their child's academic achievement (Milne & Plourde, 2006). When a student's parent feels supported, they will be more likely to invest in their child's education. In my own classroom, my connections with my student's families will be just as important as my connections to my students. Directly communicating with each family, I plan to provide them with the resources

they need and support them by sharing their child's progress, successes, and struggles. When a parent is more invested in their child's learning, then the student has greater chance of success.

Teaching these past two years taught me to create clear communication with my students and their families. Communication is essential for success in a classroom. Overcoming my own social anxieties related to communication, I realize the significance of expressing one's true emotions. If a problem arises, addressing that problem right away is essential to resolution. When issues are not talked about they fester and can become worse, which is why I believe in teaching problem solving to my kindergarten students. These skills of expressing their reasoning behind their choices can be implemented beneficially into their lives at home.

My family has always been involved with and supported my education and growth as a student. Instead of placing emphasis on achieving an "A", they placed importance on my best effort and a strong work ethic. If I tried my best to succeed in the classroom, then they were proud of me. Without even knowing it, they taught me ideas based on the concept of the growth mindset. When discussing the differences between fixed and growth mindsets in her book *Mindset, The New Psychology of Success*, Carol Dweck explains, "in one world, effort is a bad thing. It, like failure, means you're not smart or talented. If you were, you wouldn't need effort. In the other world, effort is what *makes* you smart or talented." (pg. 16). Adopting a growth mindset allows one's basic qualities to be cultivated through one's efforts. Everyone has the ability to change and grow through application and experiences. My parents challenged me to reflect on my academic progress rather than attain a certain grade. Discovering that my effort defined my success instead of my innate intelligence, I felt free to learn from my failures instead of limited by them.

In my classroom, students often expressed a perceived need and pressure to achieve outstanding grades when talking about academic excellence. My Poly sixth grade students only

cared and stressed about getting the “A”. Challenging them to reflect on their academic progress rather than achieving a certain grade is something we worked on. By utilizing a learned growth mindset, students took accountability for mistakes and recognized their setbacks, and found this to be empowering to achieve academic success. These values and goals will be incorporated into my own classroom. Teaching a growth mindset to kindergarteners will help them believe that they can accomplish anything they put their mind too. It will set up foundations of self-belief that will carry them through their career as students.

My Teaching Fellow position opened many doors and experiences, granting me the opportunity to partner with the Human Development Coordinator to plan curriculum and teach classes for ninth graders. Designed to create a dialogue about social justice and advocacy for oneself and marginalized groups, the course focused on overarching topics of negotiating identities, intersectionality, and mental health. Devoting time to teaching different communication styles and mindfulness was paramount to creating a comfortable classroom where our dialogues related to topics of race, sexuality, gender, and socioeconomic status. Social justice, integrity, and accountability were core components of class, and I encouraged students to speak up and defend others whose voices and opinions are overlooked.

As I taught at Poly, conflicting emotions of gratitude and reservation related to teaching at a private privileged school surfaced. My students, as did I, live in a sheltered bubble where money, race, and a good education helped dictate our success. Their families and their school provide the means to explore and challenge themselves with unlimited amounts of resources. Although aware of their life advantages, their naivety to personal privilege and the struggles of others has made me consider whether teaching at a private school is where I want to “make my difference”. Incorporating social justice in my curriculum allowed me to see how the impact of teaching about discrimination, target groups, and institutionalized racism and sexism can broaden my

students' conceptions of the world. This opened my eyes and confirmed the life-long importance of being an advocate.

Ironically, attending and teaching at Poly has allowed me to reflect on my own fortunate life in Pasadena. Instead of teaching at a predominately white, affluent private school, I know I can make more of a difference by teaching children in low-income areas. My role at Poly allowed me to rediscover my passion for teaching social justice. Kauchak and Eggen explain in *Education in the United States: It's Historical Roots*, "Integration has two roles: to provide all students with access to quality learning environments, and to provide opportunities for people to learn about different cultures and segments of our society." (p.137) Placing value on students' cultures is essential to their success in the classroom. I will design lessons centered around celebrating culture and identity by integrating books and projects that embrace one's diversity and personal heritage. Students learn more efficiently when they feel included and connected to the material they are learning, and centering our class around students' backgrounds allows for more student engagement and confidence building.

After reflection, I realized part of my resentment for my schooling was because I never truly learned about the world around me. Race was rarely discussed at school when I was younger. I recognized that a few of my classmates looked different than me, but it never occurred to me why they looked different, or how their experiences were vastly different from mine because of the color of their skin. My family taught me the value of respecting, appreciating and loving every one, but never explicitly discussed the biases of race, gender, and classes.

My first specific memory of learning about race was in fifth grade in Ms. Silverman's class. Our lesson revolved around learning about slavery and understanding African American history in America. One day during class, we watched the movie *Roots*. Halfway through the movie, I began to cry. I could not comprehend how and why white people brutally treated African

Americans solely because of the color of their skin. These thoughts stayed with me for the rest of the day. That night I slept with my parents. I was so distraught over the brutal torture, discrimination, hate, and racism that I had witnessed in the movie. Without fully understanding the context of racism, discrimination, and marginalization, I was under prepared to watch a movie about our nation's history of racism and hate.

Teaching social justice doesn't have an appropriate timeline, and equity for humans should be taught as early as possible. For some of my ninth-grade students, their participation in the Human Development class was the first explicit introduction to discrimination and institutionalized racism. Advocacy should be taught in our schools, and I plan to teach my students in kindergarten about race and social justice in a way that celebrates individuality and culture. Every person needs to be celebrated for their differences because without the understanding of others' unique experiences, we will not learn. Although my growth of knowledge about racial disparities in our country did not occur until much later in life, I have learned through experience that education is the best way to combat ignorance.

Teaching elementary school students will be very different from my work with middle and high school students. Planning multiple lessons every day that are creative and engaging will be one of my greatest challenges as a multiple subject teacher. I remember losing respect for my teachers due to boredom or easy lesson plans. I am nervous about getting overwhelmed by the amount of different lessons that I will need to plan for my students' learning at different levels, with disabilities, and English as a second language. Lessons planned in advance will help combat these hesitations of mine. Awareness to these hesitations will help me recognize when I need to ask for help from fellow colleagues.

Even though learning through failure is an element of teaching, part of teaching is minimizing my failures towards my students through preparation and education. Instead of

beating myself up over my failures, I need to learn from them. Learning from my mistakes will allow me to grapple with this inevitability of self-doubt. At the end of each day I can ask myself: Did I give my best effort toward moving closer to reaching my goals and objectives? Awareness, diligence, and planned reflection will allow me to monitor my progress as a teacher, especially in my first few years of teaching.

My struggle I now realize is everyone's struggle, and like every other person, I cannot change where I am born, or what family I am born into. Instead of harboring guilt over my own advantages, I can continue to work with others who did not have the same opportunities I did while growing up. As a teacher, I believe that I can make a difference educating young children by being the supportive mentor to them that was so crucial to my own success.

Teaching is a privilege. My goal is to ignite a passion for life-long learning and empower children to grow academically, socially, and emotionally by becoming autonomous, thoughtful, and inquisitive learners, who constantly strive to be their best selves. Through their unconditional support, care, and guidance, my teachers taught me to love school. I want to be one of those teachers, and I want to be my students' role model.

Part B: My Scholars

As I strive to embody my past teachers, I also draw from my own experiences and knowledge of working with children to truly understand their wants and needs as students and as people. Realizing that the strong bond between a student and their teacher can make a tremendous difference in one's social and academic growth throughout the year has helped me better my own teaching practice. The magical aspect of teaching young children is not only how much knowledge I instill in them, but how much they teach me. As I embarked on my first year

of teaching at Magnolia Academy¹ and learned about their community, demographics, and values, it did not surprise me that the school excelled because of its scholars and teachers. This year, my scholars have challenged and empowered me to be the best teacher I can be in order to ensure their success.

In the three case studies that follow, I closely examine the scholars' academic needs, socio-emotional development, and family and cultural backgrounds using interviews, standardized test data, cumulative work files, and classroom observations. I provide each scholar with an action plan with goals relating specifically to their needs and learning styles. Over the upcoming months, the scholar, their parents, and myself will work together as a team to meet these goals set in place.

I have chosen three different scholars of varying backgrounds. All three scholars are labeled as English learners, one has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and one's mother is illiterate, which qualifies her to have experienced a significant life event. The scholar's families all reside in the predominately Latino and Hispanic Pico Union neighborhood in Los Angeles. Two out of the three scholars' parents are immigrants, and all families come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. What I soon discovered is that these labels do not define my scholars, and instead are instrumental pieces to their identity. My goal for these case studies is to learn more in depth knowledge about each scholar, so I can help them succeed personally, socially, and academically both in and out of the classroom. As I got to know the scholars and their families, I discovered so much more about them than just beyond their labels.

Home visits were one of the most instrumental ways I got to know my scholars and their families. The vulnerability of letting one's teacher into their personal space and life is something

¹ Pseudonym used to protect the identity of the school

that not all families wanted as some families responded “no” when I asked to do a home visit. I recognize that allowing someone into your home, especially your child’s teacher, can be intimidating for a family. I felt nervous as I walked into each home, unsure of how I would be perceived as a white woman encroaching on their personal lives. Nevertheless, as I entered each of the three homes, I was welcomed with open arms. All three parents expressed surprise and gratitude when they learned that their child’s teacher wanted to visit their home. They recognized my dedication to their child’s success both in and out of the classroom, and my relationships with these parents are as strong as ever. Each home visit was a way for me to get to know the family and their hopes, dreams, values and backgrounds. My opportunity to spend time in each home increased my awareness of the scholar’s support systems and identities. The analytical data I collected in the classroom, along with the home visits gave me insight into how to best support these scholars and guide my teaching practices in the classroom.

Although each scholar is very different from the other, they are connected through their experiences as kindergarteners attending school at a young age. These case studies represent their journeys as students as well as mine as a new teacher. The insights and knowledge I gained while learning about my scholars and their families are eye-opening and invaluable, and ultimately push me to be a better teacher.

Case Study 1: John Rodriguez

On the first day of class, John Rodriguez² was hard to miss. Although small in stature, his talkative and enthusiastic nature made him stand out from his peers. John pranced into class the first day with a smile on his face and an eagerness to learn. Little did I know that his kindness, spunk and personality would have an everlasting effect on every teacher and person he meets at

² John is a pseudonym for the scholar’s real name

Magnolia Academy. John is a four-year-old transitional kindergartener, but I never would have guessed his younger age compared to his peers' due to his outgoing spirit and kind heart. He struck up a conversation with almost every scholar that walked in the door on the first day of school. Although he is only four, he is a determined scholar who genuinely loves school and learning.

His curiosity, creativity, connection to others, and eagerness to learn and grow are some of his greatest strengths both in and out of the classroom. John wants to know more about the world around him, and frequently asks questions when learning in class. This curiosity has helped him develop into a dedicated scholar who truly enjoys and values school. During my home visit, his mother Ella Rodriguez³, told me that he is constantly teaching her all of the letters, sounds, and numbers that he is learning in school (E. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 19, 2018). John is also an animated young boy who loves to express himself through dancing, drawing, and playing with his toys. His creativity translates into his school work during discussions and writing assignments. Both inside and outside of the classroom John's strong listening skills drive him in his everyday life. He constantly keeps an ear open to his parents' conversations for better or worse, and is like a sponge. As an emerging bilingual, his listening skills help him learn and absorb new words rapidly.

At the beginning of the school year, John's overall scores on our summative assessment reveal he struggles in both reading and math. John is unable to read at this point in the year. In math, his areas for growth are operations and algebraic thinking and measurement and data, while in reading he scored significantly low on language, writing, and literature and informational skills. Although John is placed below the 40th percentile on this initial test, he is a

³ Pseudonym to protect identity of scholar's mother

rapid learner, and I have seen through observations as well as formative and summative assessments that he is growing exponentially in these concepts.

I chose this scholar as my focus student because he has shown a lot of growth within the first weeks of school. He came into school knowing only two sounds, could not write his first name, and was unable to count above 10. Although low academically, he seemed very proficient in English, and I had never heard him speak in Spanish, although classified as an English Learner. Therefore, I wanted to learn more about him and his family and their funds of knowledge and linguistic background. I think this knowledge will help drive my instruction and support for John.

Academic standing.

As I think about the 18 English Learners in my class, John is not a scholar that pops into my mind. He communicates fluently in English, does not exhibit signs of difficulty in understanding lessons, and has no trouble expressing his wants and needs as a scholar. I am very surprised to learn John is one my English learners (EL). He classified as an EL on the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC). Overall, his initial score was 363, which classifies him as a novice, and as an emerging bilingual.

During the second week of school, I administered our first big summative assessment, the statewide MAP assessment for reading and math. Overall, John scored in 38th percentile in mathematics and 31st percentile in reading. More specifically, his areas of concern in math are operations and algebraic thinking and measurement and data. In reading, he struggles with language, writing, and literature and informational skills. These results also reveal his relative areas of strength in both math and reading. Number operations and geometry are his strengths in mathematics, which has been evident during our unit on geometry and number operations where he has excelled. His reading scores revealed his relative strength in vocabulary use and functions.

In winter, we will be taking this assessment again to see how much he has improved and where he still needs to grow as a learner. Knowing this information at the beginning of the year has helped guide my instruction for John as well as his classmates.

Scoring low on the standardize test, I wanted to see how he would perform on our summative test on letters and sounds. In the beginning of the year, John initially knew 21 of his letters, but could only identify 2 sounds. As of October 25, 2018, he knows all of his letters and 16 sounds. This increase in knowledge over a short period of time shows his grit, determination, and ability to learn. Although John scored low on the standardized test, he does a better job on formative and summative tests. He understands concepts of print, is able to write a sentence when copying from the board, and can recognize and write many of the numbers from 0-20 (See Figure A4, Appendix A). He struggles with writing sentences on his own and counting larger quantities and writing the numeral (See Figures A1 and A3, Appendix A). Many of our formative assessments are through oral communication and teacher observation. John is able to relay information about a story with no trouble and can clearly express his ideas. During summative tests, John follows the instructions and completes the tasks as asked.

Eagerly awaiting to be dismissed from the rug to get started on the activity, John quickly begins working once he sits in his seat. When working independently, John is able to complete his task as directed. His love for school and willingness to please the teacher drives his desire to complete each assignment. What hinders him from completing his work is his talkative nature. He gets distracted by his peers easily, and is willing to engage in conversation with anyone that will listen. With close proximity and frequent reminders, John stays focused on his work. Although easily distracted by his peers, John works well when partnered with his peers. He shares with others and values their opinions. He thrives off of collaboration and communication with others, and values his partners opinions.

John's work has come a long way since the beginning of the year as he writes neatly and legibly. He loves to represent his thoughts through drawings as it is still challenging for him to write words (See Figure A2, Appendix A), however, his writing has improved dramatically since the beginning of the year as he is beginning to sound out words phonetically and write corresponding letters. He has also pushed himself to label his drawings with letters and words (See Figure A1, Appendix A). John really enjoys practicing writing his numbers and letters, and is quick to get started in his writing journal every morning. On any given day, you will find John adding two of his favorite colors to his work, pink and orange. Overall, he is scholar who takes pride in his work, stays in side of the lines, and loves to express himself creatively.

Creatively John shines as a scholar. He loves to express himself through dance, drawing and writing. He also loves to create stories and has a very active imagination. When I visited him in his home, he even showed me his Halloween decorations, which consisted of his colorful drawings on the walls and bathroom! Emerging bilingual scholars learn best by doing and using practices associated with English that they repetitively practice and use over their lifetime (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018, p. 113). Providing him the opportunities in and out of the classroom to repetitively practices his numbers and letters will help him be a more successful EL scholar.

John is still building his critical thinking skills as he comes across problems both academically and socially. At this point in the school year, he is learning how to solve problems on his own, however he still relies on the assistance of the teacher. When he gets an answer wrong, he is not afraid to take risks to answer the question again with prompting. He is also always eager to raise a hand to answer questions in small groups and whole group. He isn't afraid to challenge himself academically. Socially, he is still navigating how to solve problems with his peers independently.

Although John is an EL scholar, as I have observed his work and participation in class, I have not seen a discrepancy between his speaking and listening skills and those of English Only scholars. He excels with the standards that require him to produce spoken language. When emerging bilinguals are provided a curriculum where their identities are confirmed, they are more likely to be engaged and succeed in the classroom (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018, p. 113). Providing opportunities for John to converse with his peers and the teacher will allow John's strengths to be utilized in the classroom. During our small reading groups, John is able to pick up on the pattern with ease and really enjoys reading stories. These small groups John uses his speaking skills to express his thoughts about the stories we are reading.

So far, I have noticed that John struggles with the standards that require him to express himself through writing. Although he has come a long way since the first weeks of school, he is still unable to write his last name, and struggles to write words that make sense as well as complete sentences (See Figure A1, Appendix A). He also struggles with identifying sight words. I believe that exposure to these words and continuous practice of sounding out sounds when reading and writing will help him grow in the next few months as a reader and writer.

Socio-emotional development and identity.

John and his mother greeted me outside of their apartment as I walked up to their front gate. Grinning from ear to ear, John's excitement to see me made me feel even more welcome into their home. As they greeted me at their door, John wore a pink collared shirt and a Moana necklace. Although sometimes worried about what others think, John never lets others opinions influence what he likes and believes in. A very outgoing and talkative child, John really enjoys expressing himself through conversation and dance. John is definitely comfortable with himself and his own identity.

Confident in his own abilities, John is not afraid to be his true self. He is very charismatic and loves having a good time. He enjoys more feminine things such as the color pink, dancing, emoji's, and drawing, and does not let others opinions of him change what he likes and believes in. In school, when his table won the weekly prize for the most table points, he chose the pink bracelet from our treasure chest. Unafraid to be himself, he also embraces his rebel side. During our home interview, he exclaimed that he can be a kind of sneaky and gets away with a lot of things (J. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 19, 2018). I found this very evident during our home visit and in class as he tries to push the boundaries with a charming smile on his face. It is evident that John's confidence has already helped him grow both socially and academically.

Overall, John gets along with other scholars. He is first to strike up a conversation and when someone is sad or hurting, he will always be by their side to comfort them. In our classroom, he easily makes friends. John really thrives on the relationships he creates with his teachers and peers. Behaviorally, John wants to please the teacher and is a good listener. John only needs one reminder from the teacher to stay on task, and he snaps back into focus. Although I haven't witnessed this in the classroom, his mom is concerned about his behavior in the house as he uses curse words and bullies his older brother. Although 9 years apart in age, she worries that he will talk to the other scholars in our class the same way he communicates with his brother (E. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 19, 2018). I assured her that I have not seen this kind of language or behavior in our class, but I will make sure to keep her informed.

One area for growth is his ability to solve problems with his peers on his own. John's goal in the classroom, as well as outside of the classroom, is to figure out what pieces of information are important to tell the grown-up figures around him. Because he enjoys talking and connecting with people, he constantly feels the need to share all information with me as the

teacher. He often tattles on other children instead of trying to first solve the problems (with his peers) first. Rushing up to me at any moment during class, John is quick to interrupt me when I am working with other scholars. “Ms.,” he exclaims over and over until I respond, “did you know that Sofia said this.” (J. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 23, 2018). I have been pushing him to reflect and see if the information he tells me can be solved on his own. My goal is to help him understand when to divulge certain information to me, and when he can use his words to tell others what he does and does not like about their behavior.

Each morning our class engages in morning meeting where we discuss different school values. Four of these values include self-control, grit, gratitude, and social intelligence. Within these mini lessons, I show videos, do turn and talks and engage scholars in activities that help them understand more about themselves as people and students as well as about how to build relationship skills with others. Similarly, we discuss the importance of never giving up and the differences between a fixed and growth mindset. Many of my scholars, including John, have embraced these concepts and show grit throughout the school day when faced with challenges.

Inclusivity is my main goal as a teacher. To create an inclusive environment specifically for John, I include many call and responses throughout my lesson as well as turn and talks. As a scholar who likes to talk to his peers, I want to provide him the opportunities to share his opinions and feel heard throughout each lesson during the day. Every two to three weeks, we have publishing parties where scholars share their revised writing pieces with another scholar and then whole group as well. I have found that John takes ownership and pride in his own work and confidently shares what he wrote about, even if his words do not make sense or are spelled incorrectly. Throughout the day, I also provide opportunities for “wigggle breaks” where scholars can dance out their wiggles, and I have found that John truly embraces this time to show off his amazing dance moves.

Funds of knowledge.

John often speaks about his family. Along with his mother and father, John lives with his older sister who has graduated from college and his older brother who is a teenager. John is also fortunate to live next door to his grandmother and aunt. His mom picks him up each day after school and is occasionally joined by his older sister. Eagerly awaiting his mom in the pickup line, John's excitement is apparent when his mom arrives to greet him. Living one block from school allows John to share about his day on the walk home. He tells me that he loves his mom and tells her everything (J. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 19, 2018). During my home visit, John's mom explained that she and John do everything together. She tries to expose him to many different parts of Los Angeles by visiting the Science Center and Griffith Park Observatory regularly because she knows exposure to these different resources will provide opportunities for his future success (E. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 19, 2018).

Now that John attends school full time, she worries that she is going to lose connection with him. As evidenced in my home visit, John's strong connection with his mother and family makes him feel valued as an individual. This sense of care and belonging shapes his own identity as he grows into a confident, self-assured young boy who isn't afraid to take risks and show grit when confronted with challenges both in and out of the classroom.

John grew up in a home in which the predominate language spoken was Spanish. Although this is the case, his mother, father, brother, and sister all speak English fluently. His mother told me that she also spoke English to him when he was younger because she knew that his knowledge of English would help him succeed later on in life (E. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 19, 2018). Now, she only speaks Spanish to him in their home. Occasionally during my home visit, he asked his mother a translation question in Spanish, however, his mother told me that he rarely speaks Spanish to her and she does not know why.

What perplexes her even more is that when he is with his cousins and grandparents, he speaks Spanish to them. In the classroom, I have noticed that John has started using more Spanish because I provide many opportunities for the scholars to speak both English and Spanish. His unwillingness to speak his native language in his home may be a result of wanting to be more like his siblings who speak English.

Both of John's parents are immigrants who were born in Mexico. They moved to the United States 20 years ago, and both of their parents live in the United States in Washington and in California. Before moving to Pico Union, John and his family lived in South Gate. Recognizing that Pico Union may not be the nicest of neighborhoods, John's mother loves living here because of the close proximity to everything in Los Angeles. Compared to living in South Gate, she feels very safe in their apartment. While living in South Gate, their neighbor's three children were murdered in their front yard, and she knew that her children would not suffer the same fate, which is why they quickly moved to Pico Union. She feels very connected to the community where they live, and does not plan on moving any time soon.

Although having never received a middle or high school education, John's mother and father have not let this stop them from being successful and providing for their family. They own three different sunglasses shops in downtown Los Angeles, and John frequently helps his parents at the store when he is not in school. When learning this, my preexisting beliefs about education were definitely challenged. Working as a teacher, I believe that having a strong education helps enable people's successes in life. I forget though, that although education is a driving factor in one's success, it is not the only determining factor. This family has not let their lack of education define them and their success because everything that they do is for their children, and they have used their determination and hard work to provide a life for themselves and their family.

Education is one the family's strongest values. Growing in up in Mexico, John's mom and dad barely received an education. Mom did not want to go into specific detail about her schooling, but she told me that her schooling was totally different than John's at Magnolia Academy. She never learned what John is learning now in school, and reading and writing are her greatest challenges now. As John learns more and more in school, so does she. She says that it is hard to understand his homework, but she tells her husband that they have to learn with their kids in order to help them succeed (E. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 19, 2018). John's mom was hesitant that her son would be learning from "a white lady", but after having seen my dedication to my scholars and John's growth academically, she really likes what I am doing as a teacher. Understanding her point of view, I reflect on the implicit or explicit biases that my scholars' parents may have against me being a white woman teacher their children. Because of this, I try my hardest to embrace my scholars' culture, language, and needs, and incorporate their prior experiences, interests, and background into our lessons. John's mom recognizes this and appreciates what I am doing as well as the school to ensure the best education for her son. She feels very supported and included in the school.

When I asked about her hopes and dreams for John's future, his mom quickly responded, "I want him to go to college and do something with his life. He has to because he has everything. He has the opportunities that we didn't have. That is why we are here, for them (her children), because there is nothing for them in their country" (E. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 19, 2018). John's parents have sacrificed everything to ensure John will attend a four-year college. It is evident that she and her family will support John in any and all ways possible to help him succeed. Her sacrifices and strength humble me as an educator, and make me inspired to be the best teacher I can be for her son and all of my scholars.

Experiences, interests and developmental considerations.

Playing with toys and playing outdoors are some of John's biggest interests. During my home visit, he frequently left the kitchen table to dance to a video playing on the television. At the end of the school day, scholars receive choice time and can choose what they would like to do in our class. John typically finds any toy in our library and asks others to play with him. He seems like a child who can always keep himself busy through play using his lively imagination.

During my home visit, I discovered that he was born prematurely and has been in and out of the hospital for the first three years of his life. Without learning this from his mother, I never would have guessed his tenuous medical past. This major life event has definitely shaped his development and relationships with his family. Born with a hole in his heart, John received occupational and physical therapy for the first three years of his life, although he no longer receives treatment anymore. Living in and out of the hospital since he was born, John has always been surrounded by new and unfamiliar faces. John embraces his illness and hasn't let it interfere with his life. At such a young age, he knows that he was sick, but has now recovered. While sitting at the dinner table, John nonchalantly told me, "I don't feel sick anymore, and I am glad because I didn't like being in the hospital with so many tubes attached to me" (J. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 19, 2018).

His mother revealed that this is the first year they have not needed to go to the hospital for his sickness, and she is so relieved because usually they would stay in the hospital for weeks and months. I appreciate her honesty when she divulged, "Hispanic people think that illness isn't going to happen to them, but it does. We didn't know what was going on and it was so scary" (E. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 19, 2018). This statement absolutely made me reflect on how one's culture and heritage can influence the way they view illnesses. She knew that she needed to support and care for her son, and couldn't ignore his health problems. John is lucky to have such a strong network of support.

On any given day both inside and outside of the classroom, you will find John engaging in a conversation with anyone who will listen. John is one of the most outgoing scholars in our class at Magnolia Academy. If you were to walk into to class you would either find him striking up a conversation with someone, focused deep in his work, or showing off his spectacular dance moves. I recognize that John loves to talk to anyone, but I also admire him for his ability to follow directions and pay attention.

Being an outgoing scholar and person has definitely helped John in the classroom. During my home visit, John exclaimed that he loves school (J. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 19, 2018). Always wanting to learn more, John practices writing his numbers and letters on any surface he can find, including his bathroom door and living room wall. Fortunately, his mom finds this comical and is overjoyed that he is so passionate about going to school. His favorite subject in school is learning his letters and phonics. When I asked him, what is his least favorite part of school, he said, “I don’t know how to count to 100 and that is the hardest part of school” (J. Rodriguez, personal communication, October 19, 2018).

As previously indicated, education is the utmost importance to this scholar and his family with teaching running in the family. It comes to no surprise that John is empowered to be a teacher when he grows up. When I asked John about his hopes for the future, he exclaimed, “I will graduate and attend Whitman College! And, you know, I will go to work, just like my sister. But, I want to be a teacher when I grow up” (J. Rodriguez, personal communication, October, 18, 2018). His family has greatly influenced John in such a positive way. He has outstanding role models who will sacrifice anything for him and his success. He has seen his sister graduate from college, and obtain a job after school, which is something he too aspires to do.

John’s strong support network outside of school makes him comfortable taking risks and being himself with himself. Being the youngest in the family, he is doted upon by his parents and

older siblings. His grandparents and aunt live next door, and he told me that every morning he shouts good morning to them on the way to school in the morning hours (J. Rodriguez, personal communication, October, 18, 2018). Not only is he extremely close with his immediate family, but he also travels to Mexico or Washington once a year to visit his extended family. It is evident through his parents' investment in him as a scholar and person that his support network runs deep.

John's development is typical for a four-year-old. With regards to his language development, he has an expansive vocabulary. According to Wood (1997), four-year-old children are very talkative and like to explain by saying, "...and you know what, teacher?" (p. 35). John uses this kind of language to express himself daily. John's spelling is prephonemic and many letters do not correspond to sounds (See Figure A1, Appendix A), however he has made great strides with his phonemic awareness within the last month. He is more of a visual learner and succeeds in math when using manipulatives to explore different problems. As for reading, he loves being read to and is able to pick up on predictable patterns in a text during our small reading groups. Behaviorally I have noticed that John seems to act older than his age as he knows about more mature topics and uses swear words. As Wood (1997) explains that bathroom language and other "swears" are common in four-year-old children as they are using language to figure out their identity and place in the world (p. 35). Overall, John's development is typical for a four-year-old.

Action plan.

John, a curious and confident scholar, is eager to learn and grow as a reader, writer, and mathematician. He began the year scoring in a low percentile for both math and reading, but his love for learning has helped him grow exponentially as a scholar. One of his biggest hurdles is staying focused on his work without getting distracted by conversing with his peers. My hope is

that the goals listed below will not only increase his proficiency in math and reading, but will also help him solve problems independently, increase his social awareness, and increase his independence as a learner both in and out of the classroom.

As his mom vocalized during our home visit, John is a very visual learner. He enjoys watching videos. In class, his engagement increases when he sings along with a video. This has directly correlated to his increased proficiency in counting, letter and sound recognition, and sound blending for CVC words. Emerging bilingual scholars learn best by doing and using practices associated with English that they repetitively practice and use over their lifetime. Not only does repetitive practice provide exposure to the language, it also allows scholars to feel more comfortable using the English language. Every day I have incorporated repetitive songs and videos to promote knowledge of sounds, letters, and numbers, and I can tell this has made a tremendous difference in his success as a student, so I will continue to incorporate different videos throughout our lessons.

Within our guided reading group, I have seen John make tremendous strides when sounding out words by using his knowledge of letter sound correspondence and blending. He is able to pick up a simple pattern from the book that we read each week. I will continue to model how to read books by pointing my finger under each word, stretching out sounds to figure out a word, and using pictures to decode words (Allyn, P. & Morrell, E., 2016, p. 161). Reading predictable books will expose John to sight words and will give him the opportunity to pick up on specific patterns.

Incorporating modeling into my everyday lessons will help John grow both socially and academically. According to Wood (1997), scholars learn to understand the rules of social interactions through modeling (p. 37). When I am able to model positive social behaviors in the classroom, then hopefully the scholars will exhibit this same behavior. I will provide

opportunities for scholars to practice this positive social behavior through role play. Similarly, in lessons, modeling is extremely important for the success of all scholars, but specifically emerging bilinguals. I will continue to provide visual cues and model each lesson before independent practice.

Cooperative learning is also extremely beneficial for emerging bilinguals. Cooperative learning allows scholars to work with and talk to other scholars, both bilingual and native English speakers, which allows for more exposure to the language as well as informal academic language and speaking skills to be acquired (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018, p. 114). As John expresses himself through language, he loves engaging with other scholars. Cooperative learning will not only expose John to more of the English language, but it will also allow him to acquire and develop stronger speaking skills when discussing academic topics. Ultimately, this cooperative learning will help John as an emergent bilingual increase his literacy comprehension.

Fortunately, I have created a strong foundational relationship with John's mother, and am in constant communication with her already about his successes and areas for growth in the classroom. She has been very receptive to my ideas on how to support John academically and socially. I will continue to assess John's progress throughout the year through formative and summative assessments as well as our tri-annual MAP assessment. Working as a team with John's parents, I know he will reach the end of the year goals by June. With his strong and deep support network at home and his determination and passion for learning, John will rise to the challenge of growing as a scholar and person both in and out of the classroom.

Case Study 2: Adrian Hernandez

Entering Magnolia Academy with a nervous look on his face, Adrian Hernandez⁴ seemed

⁴ Pseudonym to protect the identity of the scholar

as if he had never attended school before. I looked down at my roster, looked back up, and asked, “Are you Adrian? You were at Magnolia Academy last year, right?” (A. Hernandez, personal communication, September, 4, 2018). Adrian mumbled, “Yes”, and quickly glanced away, clearly not interested in engaging in any kind of conversation. Adrian was a transitional kindergartener last year at Magnolia Academy. After talking to his previous teacher, I learned that Adrian has an IEP for speech therapy and occupational therapy, but also showed signs of slight autism. He often spent many days at her kidney table for small group intervention, finished the school year below reading level, and often struggled to stay focus during lessons as he shouted out and repeatedly moved his hands.

The first few weeks of class as I taught scholars about our school and classroom procedures, Adrian did not stand out as someone who previously attended Magnolia Academy. He struggled to follow directions and did not feel comfortable speaking up or sharing information with me. In light of this, I wanted to know more about him as a person both in and out of the classroom because I can sense Adrian’s social and academic potential. I chose Adrian to be my focus student not only because he has an IEP, but also because I want to understand and get to know this smart, yet shy and sometimes disruptive young boy.

Overall, Adrian is a strong student academically. He enjoys using manipulatives during math, can count to 100, and can write his numbers up to 50. Reading at a guided reading level B, Adrian picks up on patterns quickly, knows a handful of sight words, and understands the concept of blending letter sounds to create words. Outside of the classroom he loves to play with his toys, and his exploration through play is one of his strengths. He understands how to play well with his peers during our choice time as he encourages them to explore new activities.

Adrian’s greatest area for growth both in and out of the classroom is his distractibility. In the classroom, he regularly interrupts lessons to express his concerns about others whereabouts or

what they are doing. When working independently, he often needs much prompting from me to stay on task or get started on his work. In and out of the classroom he tends to wander, make noises uncontrollably, and not be in control of his body movements. My hope is to understand his areas of growth and turn them into strengths in order to help him succeed to the best of his abilities in our classroom.

Academic standing.

Adrian grew up in a home where English was the primary language spoken, however, living right next door to his grandparents, Adrian was also frequently exposed to Spanish. Last year upon entering Magnolia Academy, he placed into the ELD Level 2 on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), and was categorized as an English Learner. After taking the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) this year, he still classifies as an English Learner. Growing up in a home where English was the primary language, I find these classifications very interesting, and it makes me wonder the accuracy of the ELPAC and CELDT scoring.

Taking the standardized MAP assessment last year helped boost Adrian's confidence because he knew what to expect while taking the exam this year. Overall, Adrian scored in the 57th percentile on math and in the 40th percentile on reading. Adrian is not the strongest standardized test taker, but his scores reflect that he does know a decent amount of material on the test. When taking summative tests, Adrian gets distracted very easily. When removed from these distractions, he is able to complete the test with ease, and does a great job.

Formative assessments consist of checking for understanding questions, informal conversations with the teacher, independent work, and small and whole group discussions. His shyness definitely takes over during formative assessments as he struggles to answer questions with his partner. Quick to respond, "I don't know," Adrian does not seem comfortable when I

used to ask him questions. Developmentally, this is normal for many five-year-old children to use less language when talking to adults (Wood, 1997, p. 44). With much prompting, scaffolding, and patience, I have helped Adrian feel more confident in his abilities to answer my questions, and when he does, his responses are often correct. Since further gaining my trust, he is more forthcoming when answering my questions and now is eager to show me his completed work.

Whether working independently or in a group, Adrian always completes tasks as directed. Adrian is very capable of working independently, but his ability to get distracted thwarts his success as an independent student, so constant reminders and removal of some distractions helps him complete his work. Over the course of the year, I have noticed a shift in Adrian's ability to work in a group. Repeatedly other scholars at his table would inform me that Adrian had stolen their pencil or would not share. The last few weeks, Adrian's willingness to work in groups has changed significantly. While walking by his table during a math partner game, I overheard him asking his partner, "Would you like to take a turn? I think it is your turn!" (A. Hernandez, personal conversation, October, 16, 2018). Adrian recognizes the importance of sharing and learning from his partner, and the more comfortable he gets in the classroom, the more willing he is to open up and share with a partner.

When given an assignment or task, Adrian likes to complete the task, but does not really add his own creative spin on it. His most creative time in the classroom is during writing where he shines while drawing and creating his own pictures. When I asked Adrian questions in the beginning of the year, his quick response was, "I don't know." This response is representative of his critical thinking skills and communication skills. Adrian does not choose to think critically on his own when reading a text or when answering questions. With prompting and scaffolding though, he thinks more critically and comes to conclusions during lessons. With regards to

communication, during my home visit, he did not speak many words to his mom, sister or myself, which makes me think that he has a more difficult time communicating. He doesn't raise his hand often during whole group instruction, and has a hard time indicating his needs as a student. After eating lunch with me one afternoon, I noticed a shift in Adrian's desire to communicate with me. Although he still struggles to communicate openly with his peers and me, he has already grown so much in his ability to express himself.

Knowing all of his letters and sounds, Adrian came into school with more knowledge than most. He can count to 100 with ease and knows 27 sight words. His mom told me that last year, he would come home crying and refuse to complete his homework because, "It was too hard, and I can't do it" ((L. Hernandez, personal communication, October, 22, 2018). This year is a completely different story as Adrian completes his homework on his own. He has gained confidence in his ability as a student, and it shows in the classroom. Dylan writes neatly in the lines and can blend sounds to create words, can recognize his shapes, and count objects and write their numeral (See Figure B1 and B2, Appendix B). Comparing Adrian's writing pieces from the beginning of the year to now, he has grown exponentially. He used to solely write letters with no meaning (See Figure B3, Appendix B). Now, he writes distinguishable words although not spaced out from each other (See Figure B4, Appendix B). Adrian is a strong student who is proficient in both math and reading. He ended the year at a guided reading level B, and he is now already reading at level B again. I have no concerns that he will end the year at grade level guided reading level D.

When Adrian was in preschool, he received an IEP for speech therapy and occupational therapy. I have noticed that he struggles with talking in complete sentences when speaking in class, and some words are more challenging for him to speak. I think this is why he is more hesitant to participate whole group and with partners because he fears that he will be judged for

his speech. According to the MAP assessment, Adrian struggles with number operations and measurement and data. I have not taught measurement and data yet, but I have noticed that he sometimes struggles with recognizing when to subtract and when to add objects together while doing math problems. In reading, Adrian's areas for improvement are understanding different vocabulary use, identifying sight words, and reading fluently. He is also unable to write full complete sentences, so I am really pushing him to use finger spaces and the resources in the room to spell his words.

Socio-emotional development and social identity.

Adrian's ability to use his words when someone does something he doesn't like has improved dramatically since the beginning of the year, and has turned into one of his strengths. During independent work time, he raises his hand when needing assistance and vocalizes his questions in a clear succinct manner. Socially, Adrian has made friends quickly in our class as he enjoys talking to others. This outgoingness when talking with others has helped him tremendously with making friends. Around his close friends is when he feels most comfortable being himself.

Adrian gets distracted very easily, and this distraction influences his behavior in class. Adrian is concerned with anything and everything that someone else is doing in class. Because of this, he often shouts out to announce what they are doing. Because he cares about his peers' opinions of him, he likes to make jokes and uses inappropriate language to get his peers to laugh. Flailing his hands in a repetitive motion or making noise, these behaviors disrupt lesson, yet I do not think that Adrian has control over them.

Socially, one area of need is his ability to engage with scholars whom he may not feel comfortable with or he may not like altogether. During turn and talks on the rug, he sometimes refuses to share with his partner who is a girl, and I need to encourage him to face her and share

his thoughts. His partner is shy and more reserved, so I wonder if he struggles to connect with females who are not as outgoing. He also struggles with respecting his peers' personal space. He tends to touch others on the rug without asking, and although he isn't fully aware of his body in relation to others, partially due to his own larger size, he doesn't intend to harm scholars when he crosses into their personal space.

In class, I provide many opportunities to model and practice social awareness, respecting others, and self-awareness. During our morning meetings we frequently discuss and practice the importance of respecting one's own body space. Each scholar has a space on the rug and their own desk, so we talk about how we would feel if someone took their space or personal belongings without asking. We also talk a lot about respecting others and self-control. Because Adrian likes to engage in conversations with his peers, I provide opportunities for him to work with different partners.

When I tried to learn more about Adrian's self-concept, I found it challenging. Many questions I asked him, I received a blank stare and response of, "I don't know." I think that he recognizes that he is Latino, however because he does not speak Spanish fluently, he does not identify as Hispanic as some of his other classmates do. At this period in his development, his concept of self is determined by his peers. Always cracking jokes, Adrian views himself as the class comedian, and wants to be recognized and valued by his peers. He deeply cares about what they think of him, so more often than not he tries to impress them. He also struggles to control his body movement and shouts out, and I think these behaviors are impulsive and can't be controlled. Therefore, Adrian is still trying to figure out who he is as a person and why he does the things that he does.

To create an inclusive environment for Adrian, I have stopped calling so much attention to when he makes noises that he can't control or when he moves his hands rapidly in a repetitive

nature. Instead, I address the entire class and remind them to have “calm bodies,” or “voices are turned off”. If he continues with outbursts, I calmly look in his direction, say his name, and give quick and minimum reminders of what we should be doing, and then go back to addressing the whole class. In our class, we often talk openly about how each scholar and person progresses at different paces both behaviorally and academically. I make sure to emphasize that when things are easy for others, they may not be easy for someone else, which is why we need to support our classmates when they may be struggling. I have noticed that a lot of scholars have started using language like, “I don’t like it when you...” to Adrian if he is doing something that is distracting them or taking away from their own learning. He is very receptive to this language, and has begun to use the same language when expressing concerns to other scholars. As Adrian learns to express himself through language, he will be more capable of understanding himself and his own social identity.

Funds of knowledge.

As I entered into Adrian’s apartment, I immediately noticed the small studio space with two bunk beds, one for Adrian and one for his younger sister Bethany⁵. Adrian’s mom Lydia⁶ told me that she recently had put canopies over their beds, so they could each have “their own room” (L. Hernandez, personal communication, October, 22, 2018). Adrian and Bethany are polar opposites. While Bethany is more sociable and exudes confidence, Adrian is quieter, more withdrawn and independent, which causes the two to bicker. Lydia laughs as she shares their differences, and explains, “Creating their own rooms allows them privacy in this small apartment, and they really appreciate and value having their own space.” Although living in a

⁵ Pseudonym used to protect the identity of her real name

⁶ Pseudonym used to protect the identity of her real name

small apartment, Adrian is able to roam around the whole complex because many of his family live in neighboring rooms.

Lydia has lived in the same apartment complex since she was born. Her parents live right next door, and her two sisters live in separate apartments downstairs. Having lived in Pico Union in Los Angeles her whole life, she recognizes that it has changed so much over the years, but she loves how central it is to downtown Los Angeles. Currently, she works two jobs, one at a hospital, and the other as the property manager for their apartment complex. She talks about the grueling work of being the manager, “It’s hard work. I would rather pay full rent than have to deal with people because they call me in the middle of the night at two in the morning with ridiculous problems and complaints” (L. Hernandez, personal communication, October, 22, 2018). Although this is strenuous work for her, she hopes to eventually save enough money with her husband to buy a home in the area.

Living in Pico Union her whole life, Lydia went to a public-school right down the road. Coincidentally enough, Magnolia Academy used this school as a satellite campus last year, so Lydia was very excited for Adrian to attend the same school she did. When I asked her how her education was different from Adrian’s, and she exclaimed, “1000% different! I barely learned anything in school and never had homework when I was Adrian’s age” (L. Hernandez, personal communication, October, 22, 2018).

Lydia highly values education, and knows that a strong education will help her son succeed in the future. This is why she looked into sending Adrian to Magnolia Academy. She researched the school and loved that the founder grew up in the Pico Union neighborhood, and wanted to bring a strong education to her own community. When she was growing up, everyone knew that they needed to go outside of Los Angeles to get a good education, but now they don’t need to go far to receive a strong education. She describes her own family’s views on education, “Because

my parents came from Mexico, they believed that if you made \$20 an hour, you would be set for life. But, they never really talked about going to college” (L. Hernandez, personal communication, October, 22, 2018). She does not want this same life for her son, and she hopes that in the future he will attend a four-year college. They often talk about college, and she is already so proud of his educational successes, and will do anything in her power to help him succeed in life.

One of her coworkers pays for her son to attend a private school, and he doesn’t get homework and can’t read or write. She loves the homework policy at our school because she can see what we are practicing every day. She is elated that Adrian is already reading and writing, and explains that if he would have attended a private school where they paid a bunch of money, he wouldn’t have gotten the same education (L. Hernandez, personal communication, October, 22, 2018). She recognizes the huge differences in education between her coworkers’ private school and Magnolia Academy, and is extremely happy with Magnolia’s dedication to their students and rigorous academics.

She worries about Adrian as she describes him as very shy. When he meets new people, he barely speaks, and doesn’t respond to adults when they ask him, “How are you?” Describing Adrian as a good kid who has a good heart, Lydia is concerned that Adrian will be made fun of at school and won’t make friends. When he was in preschool, the kids made fun of him because he was a bigger boy and because of his speech delay (L. Hernandez, personal communication, October, 22, 2018). This came to me as a surprise since I have barely noticed his speech delay, which makes me think that his speech has greatly improved over the last few years. Lydia is proud of her son especially which regards to his academics. She recognizes that he has grown so much academically, and notices his growing excitement for learning and school. Watching commercials for different colleges, Lydia has noticed that Adrian gets extremely excited. Her

pride will absolutely help him reach his own goals of going to college.

Both of her parents speak Spanish to Adrian, but her and her husband only speak English to the kids. Both of her kids are able to understand Spanish, but she wishes that they spoke more Spanish. She has been trying to do flashcards with them, so they feel more confident in speaking Spanish since her dreams are to take the kids to Mexico to visit the rest of her family.

During my visit, the information that I learned about Adrian's educational background and his IEP surprised me, yet helps me understand him more as a scholar. Lydia describes Adrian as someone who gets distracted very easily. She then goes on to divulge:

Yeah, I don't know if that is part of his autism. The whole thing started with his Pre-K teacher. She was not very nice to him. She was a 20-year-old little girl, and every day she would say, Adrian did this, and I think he's autistic. I know in my heart that he's autistic (L. Hernandez, personal communication, October, 22, 2018).

After this, they got him evaluated because his teacher continued to express that he's a handful, his speech is delayed, and that she didn't want him in her classroom. I can only imagine how hurtful this could be to Adrian and his parents. The teacher's role is to create an inclusive environment that supports all scholars in their educational practice instead of isolate them for their differences.

Post evaluation, Adrian was put into a moderate/severe special education classroom with children who had down syndrome. He hated this experience and came home crying every day. Then after two months, the teachers finally told Lydia that he's fine and technically okay, so he returned to an inclusive general education classroom. Upon learning this information, I felt sorry for the tribulations of Adrian's early education. This news also helped me to understand his sudden outbursts and repetitive motions, as he may have mild autism. However, this information though is not in his IEP, and he is only receiving therapy for speech and his muscle coordination.

With regards to his IEP, Lydia is extremely happy with the services that Magnolia Academy provides. She sees his vocabulary expanding on a daily basis, and at home, he repetitively practices certain words like “foot” over and over again. Her one concern with Magnolia Academy is that we do not have a playground for the children to play and release their energy. A bigger boy by nature, Adrian has bad eating habits and doesn’t like to run around, so she worries about his exercise levels. Overall though, she is extremely happy with our school and his development as a scholar.

Experiences, interests and developmental considerations.

Whenever a trash truck drives by our classroom, Adrian rushes to the window, presses his face against the glass, and stares longingly with excitement at the truck. His love for garbage trucks comes as no surprise as he frequently reads books about garbage trucks and street sweepers for homework. When asked what he wants to be when he grows up, he exclaims, “A garbage man and street cleaner!” (A. Hernandez, personal communication, November, 11, 2018). During my home visit, I noticed that he has many trucks to play with. Although Adrian is not a very active child, he does enjoy playing both inside and outside. This is very common for children his age because they use play to grow and learn about the world around them (Wood, 1997). His interests include playing with Legos and action figures, and he likes watching his iPad and movies on the television.

Born with a kidney problem, Adrian is more susceptible to infections. When he gets sick, he tends to stay sick for quite some time, and his sickness influenced his attendance at school in the past (L. Hernandez, personal communication, October, 22, 2018). His kidney problems as well as being diagnosed as slightly autistic have influenced his development. Feeling different than other children at such a young age, Adrian lacks confidence in himself. In the past, when things got tough both in and out of the classroom, he would give up instead of showing grit. This year, I

have noticed a shift in his mindset and huge growth in his confidence. I hope that he only continues to learn more about himself as a person and student.

Last year Adrian was challenged by school and didn't like it. This year he has expressed much more interest in school. When I asked him about school last year, he mentioned, "Last year, the classes seemed longer, and this year feels so much shorter" (A. Hernandez, personal communication, November, 11, 2018). Attending school from 7:20am to 3:45pm can be exhausting for a four-year-old, and for Adrian it was no different. He found reading, writing, and math to be extremely challenging, and because he did not understand the material, he lost an excitement and joy for school. Developmentally, this fear of making mistakes in the classroom is common (Wood, 1997, p. 44). Being his second year at Magnolia Academy, the familiar repetition, structure and content help him feel more knowledgeable and at ease with our lessons. His excitement for school and his own learning only continues to grow as the year progresses.

Five-year-old children learn best through active exploration of concrete materials (Wood, 1997, p. 49), and Adrian is no different. He is most successful when completing activities that are hands on like using manipulatives or blocks. Being a tactile learner, these kinds of activities keep him focused on his work. His engagement increases exponentially when we learn concepts that are of interest to him. Also, when he is in an environment with a lot of structure and minimum distractions, he is extremely successful. Conversely, when there are many distractions such as people or extraneous items in front of him, Adrian is least successful in the classroom. He tends to quickly lose focus because he constantly worries about what others are doing. My goal is to help him recognize his distractions and empower him to remove himself from those situations.

His success in school is also dictated by his comfortability in the classroom. He really enjoys writing, math, and science, and during these instructional periods, I have noticed an increase in

engagement as he is focused and determined to learn more. Adrian's comfortable level with reading is not as high. During our close readings and read aloud portions of the day, Adrian loses his focus and frequently turns to talk to his friends. Although less comfortable with reading, Adrian's interest has slightly increased as he gains confidence in his own reading abilities during the first three months of the school year.

School has never been an option for Adrian. Early on in his life, his parents instilled the importance of learning. He fully comprehends that his educational success will provide him opportunities when he is older. Unaware of his family's economic predicament, he thinks that he lives in a huge house because his extended family lives in apartments next door. Adrian is very close with his family as they all live in the same building, and so he lives near many of his cousins.

Not only does Adrian live with his mom, dad, and sister in a studio bedroom apartment, but also, he lives in the same apartment building as his grandparents, two aunts, and cousins. Adrian's has a vast support network in school. Not only do I support him with his academics and behavior in class, but he also works closely with an occupational and speech therapist. With many adult's supporting Adrian's development and success, he also has a lot of his support from his cousins and friends. His cousin Sofia⁷, a first grader at Magnolia Academy, is always looking out for Adrian as are his friends who provide support and friendship in the classroom. Adrian's grandma picks both him and his cousin up at school since they both attend Magnolia Academy.

As a scholar with an IEP, Adrian receives accommodations in my class. His accommodations consist of taking assessments in areas free of distractions as well as preferential seating. He does not need any kind of specific technologies to help him be more successful as a student, although

⁷ Pseudonym used to protect the identity of the child

every scholar at Magnolia Academy has their own computer. He is able to use this computer with ease, but he does get quite distracted. Adrian sits towards the front of the class while on the rug and at his table, and this has greatly increased his focus and minimized his ability to get distracted.

Developmentally Adrian exhibits signs of both typical and atypical development for a five-year-old. He likes to play, but as his mom previously mentioned, Adrian is not a very active child, which is developmentally atypical (Wood, 1997, p. 46). He also struggles to control his own physical movements as he moves his hands in a repetitive motion. Socially, he wants to be “good”, but he doesn’t quite know how to do this, and cannot control his actions. Like most five-year-old children, he looks for approval in authority figures, and thrives in a structured environment. I would argue that his more atypical developmental patterns are in part due to his mild autism and speech delays.

Action plan.

Adrian, a smart young boy, is a child that thrives in a structured, loving environment. Attending Magnolia Academy for the second year in a row has helped him gain confidence in his abilities as a scholar. At the beginning of the year, he could identify all of his letters and sounds, count to 100, and read at a level A guided reading book. Although scoring in the 40th percentile in math, I have yet to see this as an academic setback. One of his biggest hurdles is staying focused on his work without getting distracted by his peers and other things in the classroom. My hope is that the goals listed below will not only increase his proficiency in math and reading, but will also teach him to deal with distractions, learn new communication skills, increase his social awareness, and recognize his needs as learner and vocalize those needs.

One area for growth is Adrian’s reading fluency, vocabulary, and sight word knowledge. To enhance his knowledge, I plan to continue reading every day to the scholars. As scholars are

exposed to more words, their vocabulary continues to grow (Tilton, 1996, in class resource provided by CGU). I would also like to create more visual aids in our classroom for Adrian to be exposed to certain vocabulary words. I will continue to add sight words to our word wall in the classroom, and I would like to provide resources to send home for Adrian to practice with his mom. With regards to fluency, Adrian needs to practice reading every day. One way to enhance fluency is to have Adrian listen to a book on tape while he follows along with the words. Exposure to more vocabulary words and reading practice will hopefully increase Adrian's skills as a reader.

Children his age can only focus on one thing at a time (Wood, 1997, p. 45). During our math lessons, I plan to alter my teaching by giving Adrian instructions one at a time. He tends to get flustered when there are too many instructions, so I believe this will help minimize his distractions and maximize his learning. Evertson, Emmer, & Watson (2012) posit that providing brief, clear instructions to scholars with special needs helps them thrive as students (p. 226). By incorporating more explicit and brief instructions into my lesson plans, I hope to minimize his distractions and enhance his learning.

Due to Adrian's speech delay, it will be important for me to incorporate articulation and language strategies in our everyday lessons. Some examples of these strategies include, repeating the correct sound production of a misarticulated sound, gaining the scholars attention before speaking, giving them adequate processing time, and providing multi-step directions that are broken apart (SPED lecture at CGU, November, 10, 2018). By giving Adrian time to process the information given to him, he will have more success articulating his thoughts. The more opportunities he has to practice speaking in class, the more comfortable he will be articulating challenging words.

Incorporating teacher modeling into my everyday lessons will help John grow both socially and academically. According to Wood (1997), teacher modeling and directed role play provides chances for scholars to learn, practice, and develop their language and social skills (p. 49). While modeling positive social behaviors throughout the day and providing sentence frames for communication, I will allow time to practice these positive social behaviors through role play and turn and talks. My hope is that Adrian uses these communication skills when addressing his peers, and learns the importance of his own personal space as well as others.

Lastly, I would like to provide a space where Adrian feels comfortable when he cannot control his vocalizations or his body movements. In the past, I have been quick to reprimand him for these actions, however now, I believe it is more important to not draw attention to them. Instead I will give calm, one-word redirections, and continue on with our daily activities. I will continue to assess Adrian's progress throughout the year through formative and summative assessments as well as our tri-annual MAP assessment. I would also like to have daily check ins with him to see how he is feeling about his own learning and behavior in school.

Overjoyed when I shared Adrian's action plan, Lydia is shocked that a teacher is so devoted to her students. She appreciates my dedication to her son's learning, and wants to maintain an open line of communication with me throughout the year. With his parents' devotion to their son's education, his strong extended familial support, and his building confidence in his own academic capabilities, Adrian's potential as a scholar is only just beginning, and will continue to blossom throughout this year in kindergarten.

Case Study 3: Daniela Molina

Tears streaming down her face, Daniela Molina⁸ refused to step into class the first day of

⁸ Pseudonym for to protect the identity of the scholar

school. With coaxing from two other teachers, Daniela finally entered our class, and I quickly realized this was the last place she wanted to be. A quiet and shy girl, Daniela spent most days in the first month of school crying. As a young girl who recently turn five, she missed her mom and had never experienced a moment apart from her family. Thrust into this new experience, she struggled to transition into life in a classroom. Once settled and calmed down in class, she spent a lot of the time with her head down, whether on the carpet or at her desk. As I slowly gained her trust, she began to blossom into an eager scholar wanting to learn, and I could see the potential and brilliance behind her tears.

Daniela's love for school and learning definitely helps her grow as a scholar. One of her greatest strengths is reading. More specifically she does a great job of picking up on the pattern in books when reading and looking at the pictures to figure out the words. I have noticed that her love for reading has grown since school began. When she first entered class, she could not write her letters and numbers, but now she is able to copy words, letters, and numbers with ease. Outside of the classroom, Daniela's love for her family is one of her greatest strengths. Her true self shines when she is around her loved ones. She has such a bubbly, outgoing personality, but these traits fade in class. Without visiting her home, I would not have known that she is an extremely talkative young girl. She was constantly singing and wanting to show me everything. As Daniela becomes more comfortable in class, her strengths outside of the classroom, compassion and zest, will begin to shine in our class.

Math is one of Daniela's areas for growth as she scored in the 8th percentile on our initial beginning of the year assessment. She specifically struggles with algebraic thinking and number and operations. Sometimes it is difficult for her to count objects as well as identify a specific number and write the numeral to express the object she counts. Staying engaged and focused is another area for growth. She gets distracted easily by anything anyone else is doing in our

classroom and struggles to solve problems on her own.

This disengagement from academics has created a barrier between her and her success both in and out of the classroom. At the beginning of the year, she frequently sat with her head down, and chose to not participate in activities. This limited her knowledge and growth as a student. Similarly, outside of the classroom, she was not doing her homework, due to reasons that will become clear throughout this paper, and her lack of any academic practice and exposure outside of the classroom affected her progression as a student. I have seen so much change and growth within these last three months and I am confident in her abilities to succeed in our class.

Each morning as I greeted Daniela at the door, she did not want to turn in her homework. To my dismay, time after time, I opened her folder to a blank sheet of paper, exactly as I had sent it home. Finally, I received an email from our office, as Daniela's mom had requested a meeting to learn about the homework because she cannot read and write and wanted to help her daughter complete her homework. Her openness about her illiteracy and willingness to ask for help, truly opened my eyes to how Daniela's mom wanted her child to succeed even though she didn't fully know how to support her in that process. I noticed Daniela's struggles both socially and academically in the classroom, and now with this new information of a glimpse into her mom's educational background, I knew I wanted Daniela to be my focus student. I want not only to establish a trusting relationship and help her thrive academically, but also to get to know her and her family on a deeper level in order to support them to the best of my ability.

Academic standing.

The first week of class, Daniela barely spoke, and I could tell she was intimidated by me as a teacher. I overheard other teachers talking to her in Spanish, and even as I used my own broken Spanish to communicate, I struggled to gain her trust. Daniela classified as an English Learner on the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC).

As I administered the beginning of the year standardized MAP assessment, I noticed that Daniela's lack of computer knowledge and skills made it more challenging for her to complete the assessment. With guidance and support, she quickly learned how to use the computer and could complete the assessment independently. Overall, Daniela scored in the 48th percentile in reading and in the 8th percentile in math. More specifically, her areas of concern in math are operations and algebraic thinking as well as numbers and operations. Her relative strengths in math are measurement and data and geometry, which showed during our shapes unit where she scored 100% on the summative math quiz. In reading, her specific weaknesses are foundational skills, language and writing, while her strengths are literature, informational skills, and vocabulary use and functions. My hopes are that Daniela's scores on the winter standardized MAP assessment will increase significantly in math as well as reading.

Our summative letters and sounds test at the beginning of the year was eye opening as Daniela could not identify any letters or sounds. As of November 15, 2018, she knows 10 sounds and 7 letters. Although this progression is slower than I would like, I am hopeful that by the end of December she will know all of her letters and sounds. Daniela struggles to complete summative assessments on her own, and often needs direction and guidance from an adult. Over time, she has gotten better at being able to respond to shorter one-word questions in math.

At the beginning of the year, Daniela did not even attempt to answer any formative assessments when my questions posed were whole group or individual. Her shyness and inability to know the answer caused her to freeze and retract into her own personal space. On multiple occasions, I recall her crying when I asked her a question on the spot whole group. Now however, Daniela raises her hand frequently to answer questions. Although she is unable to articulate her thoughts when summarizing a text, she enthusiastically raises her hand to participate. Furthermore, during writing, phonics, and guided reading, she really shines and is

able to contribute to our whole group conversation. Daniela has come a long way in such a short amount of time when completing and responding to assessments.

Often approaching Daniela's desk during independent work time, I was frustrated to see that she had not written much at all. What I soon realized was that she didn't know how to write. I provided differentiation for her by having her trace my words written in highlighter. What I noticed was that she really enjoyed drawing as opposed to completing the task provided for her. As time has progressed, and she feels more comfortable in our class, and the quality of her work has increased drastically. She is excited to get started on an assigned task, and frequently raises a hand to proudly show me her work. She doesn't need the scaffolding of my highlighter and can write her first name by memory and can almost write her last name. She can also copy down sentences, words, and numbers from the board or a piece of paper, which she was unable to do at the beginning of the year. She writes neatly and stays in the lines, and her pictures during writing can be easily identified.

Although Daniela is taking more ownership of her work, she often struggles to complete her work when working independently. Looking at some of her first work of the year (See Figure C1, Appendix

C), she barely produced any work on the page when asked to draw and write about what she likes to do. When asked to write her numbers in sequential order, she only wrote from number one to eight out of 20 (See Figure C2, Appendix C). As time has progressed in our classroom, I have seen much improvement on her ability to complete tasks. When comparing two writing samples, I notice that she does not write anything on her first drawing (See Figure C3, Appendix C), but on her more recent response to what she likes to do, she attempts to write a sentence and spends less time drawing her picture (See Figure C4, Appendix C). This indicates that she is beginning to understand the importance of completing her work and feeling more confident in

her abilities to do so. This confidence has directly played a role in her ability to work in groups. Initially, she was reserved and refused to speak up, but now she is more than willing to share her opinions with her peers, and does an excellent job of listening.

Reading is definitely Daniela's greatest overall strength. She understands concepts of print and how to look at the pictures to understand what is going on in a story. Daniela is beginning to understand that letters make sounds, words are composed of letters, and words make up sentences. During guided reading, she is first to pick up the pattern on each page. Her confidence has skyrocketed as she realizes that she is smart and can be a reader. This confidence has allowed her to take pride in her own work, and she gladly shares with me and other scholars.

So far, Daniela struggles with the standards in math that require her to express herself through writing. In math, she struggles to count objects and write numbers above ten. Although she has come a long way since the beginning of school, she still cannot write her full first and last name, and struggles to write words. In reading, she is still unable to identify most sight words. I believe that with more repetitive practice and exposure to writing and reading, she will grow as a reader, writer, and mathematician.

During our lessons, I model the activity for the scholars, and then provide them time to create their own pieces of work independently. I have noticed that Daniela either chooses to replicate my modeled work or create a piece that highlights her family. Although not responding to a writing prompt correctly, she has no trouble putting her own creative spin to her work. I have seen her creativity blossom as she adds color to her work, and begins to think of her own ideas. Similarly, her critical thinking skills are lacking when it comes to thinking in depth about a problem or assignment, and she struggles to ask questions when she is confused or lost. I do believe this is correlated to her comfortability attending school and interacting with me as her teacher. She barely communicated with me in the beginning weeks, and often looked fearful

when I asked her to do something. Now that I have forged a bond and relationship with her, she is more willing to express herself as well as approach me when she wants to communicate information. I believe that our relationship will only grow in strength, and this will help her take more risks in our class both academically and socially.

Socio-emotional development and social identity

In the beginning of the year, Daniela struggled behaviorally. Because she missed her mom and did not want to be in class, she spent a lot of her time crying, so it was challenging for her to follow directions. “Time to put away our crayons and papers and make our way to the carpet,” I would exclaim joyfully. Daniela typically was the last scholar to pack up her materials, and when I put the spotlight on her, she would freeze up and begin to cry. Once on the rug, she placed her head on the floor, put her shoelaces in her mouth, refused to talk to her partners during turn and talk, or was distracted by small pieces of fuzz on the ground. This “fearful” behavior is developmentally typical for a four-year-old (Wood, 1997, p. 34). Even with prompting and reminders, she seemed uninterested in our lessons. Now with two and half months passing in school, Daniela’s behavior and engagement has drastically changed. She is often first to the rug after my directions. With a smile stretching across her face, she sings along with our daily educational songs, participates in discussions, and follows instructions after one direction. Her behavior and ability to follow directions dramatically increased when I gained her trust, and she felt more comfortable in our class.

Daniela gets along with her peers and craves relationships with them, but she doesn’t fully know how to build these relationship skills. It will be important for me to create opportunities for her to interact with many different scholars in our class, especially scholars who excel in building relationships. When social behavior is modeled (Wood, 1997), scholars are more likely to exhibit that same behavior (p. 37). More importantly once she has the opportunity to see this

modeled behavior, she must be able to practice these skills. One opportunity I can provide in class is allowing for role play and small dramas where friendship skills are practiced.

Furthermore, at our school we have social groups for scholars that struggle making connections with others, and I have nominated Daniela to be a part of this social group. My hope is that she will learn skills to use language to express herself with her classmates, and during our choice time, I will be able to help her implement and practice these skills with her classmates.

Self-awareness, social intelligence, and grit are three skills that I explicitly teach during our morning meetings. We go in depth about peoples' personal bubbles, and the importance of respecting others. One example of this is when I taught scholars about consent. Many kids love to hug me and each other. I wanted to emphasize that some people do not like to be hugged, so they needed to ask before entering into someone else's personal space. With many opportunities to discuss grit and growth mindset, my scholars including Daniela dive head first into the concept of never giving up. I will continue to create these moments in class to help Daniela preserve because I have seen great progress in her academics and sociability.

As a four-year-old, Daniela is still developing her own self-concept. Her world revolves around herself and her family. Always arriving with a stuffed animal in her backpack, she is delighted to show me her most valuable and treasured toys, which is a very typical development of a four-year-old who values play (Wood, 1997, p. 35). In class, she now wants to be noticed by me as the teacher, and she takes pride in her own work. Her identity also directly relates to her mom's as she idolizes and respects her, and spends most all of her time with her. Four-year-olds are constantly looking for approval from their loved ones and authority. This typical developmental aspect of Daniela shows that she thrives on the support from an adult figure.

Daniela began to succeed in class due to the rigid structure and expectations. For scholars living in poverty creating a structured and safe environment is crucial for their self-development

(Evertson et al., 2012, p. 231). Creating a consistent schedule in my classroom allows scholars to know exactly what is coming next. For Daniela the uncertainty of school caused her to shut down and reach her fight or flight mode. I have noticed that as her comfort level increases in class, she is able to focus on their own identity and her relations to others.

More often than not, I think of an inclusive classroom as one where scholars feel comfortable taking risks around their peers because they do not feel judged. What I failed to forget is that, “One of the most powerful and rewarding ways we can help our students flourish is to provide the safety of a trusting, healthy relationship.” (Souers & Hall, 2016, p. 102). One way for me to support Daniela in the classroom is to provide more small group instruction and have one on one interactions with her. Instead of being more sympathetic towards Daniela’s anxieties, I assumed that her friends would help her acclimate to our classroom. In reality, she needed more clear guidance and love from me. With each passing day, I gained her trust by taking time to sit with her at lunch or ask her questions about her own life. I plan to continue to develop our relationship and build a bond with Daniela where she feels safe thinking critically and taking risks in our classroom.

Funds of knowledge.

When Daniela was very young, her mom Cynthia⁹ worked in a factory, and so Daniela lived with her cousins and aunt for an extended period of time. English was the primary language spoken in the home, so Daniela only spoke English. Although she heard Spanish on a daily basis, she never spoke it, so when she moved back home with mom at the age of 18 months, she could not communicate with her mom because her mom only spoke Spanish (C. Molina, personal communication, October 18, 2018). Daniela’s mom’s first and only language is Spanish, and

⁹ Pseudonym used to protect mother’s identity

thus the primary language spoken in her home is Spanish. Upon hearing this, I was surprised because I always assumed that Daniela spoke fluent Spanish, which is why she had a tougher time transitioning into school. Since the beginning of school though, Daniela's mom has noticed that she has started speaking more Spanish in the household.

Although a translator was necessary during my home visit, I never felt as if I was not a part of the conversation. She expressed her surprise when I wanted to come and visit the home because she had never heard of a teacher coming to visit her students. My dedication to her daughter's education elated her (C. Molina, personal communication, October 18, 2018). When I asked about her hopes and dreams for Daniela's future, she said that she wanted her to be an excellent scholar, and that's why she looked for Magnolia Academy. She wants Daniela to attend a school that will push her academically, and knows that Magnolia Academy will do just that.

Daniela's mom did not receive any formal education. Like her parents, school wasn't available to them, so her parents didn't know how to push her when she was younger. She doesn't want to make the mistake her parents made with Daniela (C. Molina, personal communication, October 18, 2018). Wanting to be there to support her daughter in her education, she expresses how she may not have any educational experience, but she wants to do everything in her ability to push Daniela, so that she can do anything she puts her mind to. With a quick ten-minute walk from school, she says that her main goal is dedicating herself to Daniela's education. She believes that if she goes to a bad school it will affect her ability to go to college. Working from home as a seamstress allows her a more flexible schedule to support Daniela with her schooling. It is evident that her daughter's education is the number one priority in her life, and she would sacrifice anything for her daughter to have a successful life and career.

Her daughter's education means everything to her. She tells the translator that she is putting all of her marbles in Daniela, which is why her education is so important. With her son

diagnosed with autism at a young age, he is now 12 and can barely write his own name. In light of this, she divulges that she loves her son and helps him to the best of her ability, but there is only so much that she can do. She bluntly says that he can't do anything, but he is brilliant in a different way. Because of this, she hopes that Daniela is going to be the one to support him (C. Molina, personal communication, October 18, 2018). A lot of pressure lies on the shoulders of this four-year-old girl to provide for her family, and I want to do everything in my power to instill her with knowledge and a passion for lifelong learning.

Born in Guatemala, Cynthia immigrated to the United States 15 years ago. Upon arrival, she moved into an apartment complex in the Pico Union neighborhood, and apart from moving to different apartments within the complex, she hasn't moved since. Describing Pico Union as calm, she loves living in the neighborhood. The residents in her apartment complex are like family because they know each other so well and help each other out. Expressing that she wouldn't change anything about the neighborhood, Cynthia would only want to live in a cheaper apartment because her rent has risen over the last year. Living close to school makes her appreciate her neighborhood even more now.

Describing Daniela as happy yet shy, her mom recognizes the potential in her daughter. At home she is always wanting to play and dance, and she really enjoys when they go to the park as a family. Overall, her mom says that she is a bubbly young girl, but when placed in new situations with new people she is more reserved. A quick learner, Daniela truly enjoys learning, her mom explains (C. Molina, personal communication, October 18, 2018). When she attended a day care program before attending Magnolia Academy, she mentions that Daniela's teachers said she absorbed new information very quickly. She says that her daughter benefits when she has a goal set in place that she can finish. Research shows that when children have structure and support, especially when coming from low income homes, they are more likely to thrive and

succeed (Evertson et. al, 2012, p. 231). I believe this is no different for Daniela, and her mom recognizes the benefit of setting goals and creating structure.

Waking up every Sunday morning extremely early to attend church, Daniela's family is very religious. They do not spend much time out of the house unless going to the park or going to church, which makes me believe that religion is an important part of their life. They celebrate all of the big holidays such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Halloween. Daniela walked in to class on Halloween with tears rolling down her cheeks because she forgot to wear her costume. Not only are holidays important to Daniela's mom, but also to Daniela.

What surprised me the most about my home visit was Daniela's mom's openness and honesty about her own life. Many people would be ashamed of not knowing how to read and write, but she is so forthcoming with this information. She has such a big heart, and does not want her own setbacks to influence her children's success. I was moved by her love, support, and commitment to her daughter's success. Just because someone cannot read or write does not mean that they are not smart or any less of an amazing person. This challenged my own biases, and opened my eyes to the inequities in the world. She had no choice in determining her own education, but she is using her own experiences to change her children's lives.

Experiences, interests and developmental considerations.

Spending most all of her time with her mom, brother, cousins, and aunt, family means everything to Daniela. Living in a one-bedroom apartment with 7 other people has created a strong bond between Daniela and her family. She sleeps with her mom in a bunkbed in their common space or living room area. At home, Daniela loves playing with toys, doing puzzles and dancing. This came to no surprise as she often chooses to complete the most challenging puzzles during our "choice time" at the end of the day. Her engagement increases exponentially when I put on a GoNoodle, and she is allowed to express herself through dance. Her mom told me that

she isn't interested in watching videos or television, which surprised me because she is usually most engaged during the videos we watch at school. A constant stream of tv was running while at her house, so I understand how she is immune to videos and prefers to spend her time playing. She also really likes going to the park and taking bubble baths with her "guppy" (D. Molina, personal conversation, November 11, 2018). Her interest in dance and playing with toys is developmentally appropriate for a four-year-old.

When asked, Daniela's aspirations for her future are abstract and unclear. In class, we often ponder the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" The line between fiction and fantasy is blurred for her on this concept as she wants to be her mom and the Disney character Elsa. Even as I ask Daniela and two other scholars this question, she is unable to conceptualize what a job in the future might look like for her, although her peers respond with a doctor and ballerina (scholars, personal conversation, November 11, 2018). This leads me to believe that there is a disconnect going on at home with the conversations surrounding Daniela's educational future compared to her career future.

As previously mentioned, when I asked her mom what her hopes are for Daniela, she replied that she wants her to be a great student, so she can take care of herself and her brother. However, she never mentioned anything about what her career might look like. I believe Daniela's mom realizes that being a good student will help her succeed in life, but doesn't know exactly what that life might look like for Daniela after she graduates from college. In class, I want to develop Daniela's sense for the future by thinking more concretely about what she wants to be when she grows up and help her discover her passions.

As most children at her age attend school, they enjoy being in a classroom, and Daniela is no different (Wood, 1997, p. 36). She enjoys reading, writing, math, and playing during "choice time", which are all developmentally appropriate. This leads me to believe that she thrives on the

structures set in place at school. When elaborating about school, she exclaimed, “I don’t like to play only to learn” (D. Molina, personal conversation, November 11, 2018). These sentiments may resemble more of her mom’s thoughts than her own because on multiple occasions she has divulged her interest in playing. With her mom’s passion for Daniela’s education, Daniela emulates these same thoughts and beliefs. This development is somewhat atypical since children her age tend to make decisions based on their own interests and are not overly dependent on adults (Wood, 1997, p. 34). There is nothing that Daniela dislikes about school. This makes me believe that she genuinely loves learning. She enjoys the structured nature of school and likes expressing herself academically and creatively not only for herself, but also to make her mother proud.

Always wanting to learn and be a good student, Daniela does not fully understand the reasons behind her mom’s push for a strong education. With a lack of schooling and inability to read and write, Daniela’s mom wants the cycle of no education to end with her daughter. Aware of her own education and how it has impacted her children’s lives emotionally, economically, and educationally, Daniela’s mom recognizes that quality education for her daughter will help her rise out of living in poverty (C. Molina, personal conversation, October, 18, 2018). Therefore, she greatly emphasizes the importance of education and being a great student to Daniela. Apparent in the conversations I have with Daniela relating to school, she doesn’t want to let her mom down, which is partly why she really enjoys school (D. Molina, personal conversation, November 11, 2018). Although unaware of the weight placed upon her shoulders for the future success of her family, Daniela will overtime learn why her own education and hard work are important for not only her future, but also her family’s. The strong foundational education that she receives at Magnolia Academy will make both her and her mom’s dreams a reality for the future.

Not only has her mom's lack of education influenced Daniela's development as a person, but so has her brother's diagnosis of severe autism at the age of two. Now 12 years old, he cannot write his own name and struggles to communicate. Daniela's mom explained that she does not have much hope for his working future. Therefore, she has placed all of her eggs in Daniela's basket and hopes that she can support both her and her brother (C. Molina, personal conversation, October, 18, 2018). I think her brother's developmental disorder has limited their family's ability to explore the city as they often do not leave their home on the weekends except to attend church or go to the park. This impacts Daniela as she does not receive the same exposure to different experiences in the city that her peers may experience with their families. It could also explain why she timidly approaches social situations like attending school because she is only surrounded by the comforts of her family in her home.

Daniela's mom is her greatest role model, and on many days throughout the week, tears well up in her eyes as she divulges how she misses her mom greatly. Her mom is her whole world and has greatly influenced her ideas on the importance of education. Dedication, love, and support are three constants in Daniela's life because her mom's world revolves around her daughter. It warms my heart to see the strong bond and connection they share since it seems like Daniela's mom did not have that same connection with her own parents.

In school, Daniela is slowly beginning to make friends. Because of her timid and shy demeanor, she disengaged not only from the lessons, but also from other scholars. Over the last month, I have seen her bubbly personality shine as she is more comfortable with her classmates. Originally, she was sitting at a table with only one other person, and recently I have moved her to be sitting with three other scholars, which has helped her gain confidence. As the teacher, I am her greatest support at school. She trusts me and now feels comfortable approaching me, asks me questions, and is eager to participate in class. Outside of school her support system consists of

her mom, aunts, and brother's therapists. Living at home with her mom and aunts has created a supportive environment where someone is always there to guide her. Once a week her brother's therapist comes to their home, and the therapist allows Daniela to join and learn reading and math with them. Daniela's mom told me that this time spent with the therapist has significantly impacted Daniela's learning in a positive way (C. Molina, personal conversation, October, 18, 2018). Daniela's strong support network has greatly influenced her growth and development as a scholar.

Reflection is more challenging for Daniela as she is four, so when I asked her about where she feels most comfortable and least comfortable at school, she had a hard time answering. She exclaimed, "I love school! I really like learning and being with my friends" (D. Molina, personal communication, November 13, 2018). It is evident that she feels more and more comfortable in school each day because she used to sit with her head down on the carpet, but now, she raises her hand to participate and contribute to our conversations. Although her answers are brief, she is able to produce one short sentence. I think that she also feels very comfortable during PE because she can dance and express herself.

Phonics, guided reading, and writing are times when Daniela is most successful as a student. I think this is because she genuinely loves these subjects, so she is more engaged during the activities. Grinning from ear to ear when she finally catches the pattern in books during our guided reading groups, she feels accomplished and empowered to continue taking risks and read sentences. On the flip side, Daniela's short attention span greatly impacts her ability to learn. She is easily distracted by the people around her and any small object on the ground, so her focus during instruction plays a role in her ability to learn. Because of this distraction, she did not grasp concepts in math and reading as quickly as the other scholars, which has set her back academically. Her eagerness to learn has blossomed over the last month, and I am excited to see

her progress as a scholar.

Seeing her home environment, which does not allow for any alone time, and her attachment to her mother, helps me better understand her behavior in class. I now better know why she is always concerned with other scholars because at home, she has to be. It is more challenging for her to work independently because she has relied so much on her mom for her life, and in class she needs to be validated and is constantly showing me her excitement when she completes one of her assessments. She has become a more independent scholar as she is more willing to complete tasks on her own as the school year progressed. I often ask her if she is proud of herself, and she exclaims, “Yes!” (D. Molina, personal communication). Sometimes I forget that children at such a young age need to be validated for their work in order for them to progress to their next task.

Action plan.

Daniela’s excitement about learning and the pride she takes in her work have led to her growth and succeed as a scholar. With her mom’s support at home, Daniela knows the importance of her own education. Coming in to school as a four-year-old, lack of content knowledge limited her ability to perform as a scholar, which made her feel uncomfortable in our classroom. One of her biggest hurdles is her shyness and insecurities that set her back in her own learning. As time has progressed, she has grown into her own as a student that genuinely wants to learn. My hope for Daniela is that the goals listed below will not only help her get caught up academically, but also socially and help her gain confidence in the classroom.

At the beginning of the year she knew no letters or letter sounds, and could not write her own name. I saw the discouragement in her eyes as she slowly disengaged because of her lack of knowledge. Providing visual aids, making expectations and instructions explicit, and allowing time for repetition will help Daniela gain confidence as a lower achieving scholar, English

Learner, and scholar living in poverty (Evertson et al., 2012, p. 233). Visual aids will help Daniela visualize and understand what I am teaching. Clear expectations will allow Daniela to know specifically what she needs to do in order to complete a task, which should help alleviate her fears as a scholar. Lastly, with constant repetition and practice, Daniela's confidence will grow as she becomes more comfortable with the content we learn in class.

Small group remedial instruction is one of the most effective ways I can support Daniela in math, reading, and writing. Daniela needs extra support in the classroom to get caught up on work that she missed when distraught and withdrawn the first month of school. According to Evertson et al. (2012), remedial instruction for low-achieving students allows for students to succeed on tasks and materials (p. 234). By pulling Daniela for remedial instruction, I can teach to her specific academic needs, and provide activities where she succeeds.

During math, reading, and writing, Daniela has made tremendous strides already in her growth as a scholar. During math intervention, I plan to specifically teach Daniela how to count objects one-to-one, use objects to represent numbers, and write these numerals up to 20. I have already seen tremendous growth in her math knowledge. During writing and reading, we will continue to practice identifying and writing all of the letters and sounds and blending these letters to create words. When working one-on-one, I have noticed Daniela stays more focused on learning which leads her to be more successful. My hope is that this small group support will help Daniela grow academically.

One way I plan to help her gain confidence in the classroom is to assign her a peer buddy. When scholars feel supported by their peers in the classroom, they feel more a part of a community (Evertson et al., 2012, p. 232). Allowing peers to support Daniela will create an inclusive environment. My hope is that Daniela will have a person to confide in and talk about problems and solutions. Not only will I be able to remind her of her potential and abilities, but

her peer buddy can also support and encourage her with her academics. Having an extra support system in class will increase her confidence as a friend and scholar.

Another way to create an inclusive and positive classroom environment for Daniela is to explicitly and openly talk about how we handle stress. According to Sours and Hall (2016) “helping students gain awareness of their stress response and teaching them positive ways to respond to stress are key steps that help them deal with all kinds of challenges” (p. 63). For four, five and six-year-old children, especially Daniela, they may not be able to comprehend that they are stressed. I must validate all scholars’ feelings, while also teaching them different kinds of coping mechanisms and skills when they feel stressed. When Daniela feels validated, along with any child, they will feel safer and a part of our community.

Outside of the classroom, I will support Daniela’s learning by sending home academically appropriate resources. Evertson et al. (2012) posit that teachers need to provide extra supplies and materials to children living in poverty (p. 232). By continuing to send home resources each day for Daniela, her confidence will grow as a scholar, which I hope will translate into class. Her mom is elated about receiving extra resources. I already send home a book to read for homework, but now I would like to further enhance her reading skills by sending home a book on tape and its hard copy. This way Daniela will be able to follow along with each word, be exposed to more sight words, and understand the story’s meaning. Although not mandatory, these extra resources should boost Daniela’s confidence in reading

I have created a strong relationship with Daniela’s mom through our daily communication during pick up, and plan to continue this communication about Daniela’s successes and areas for growth in the classroom. Daniela’s mom is very receptive to my ideas on how to support Daniela academically and socially both in and out of the classroom, and is thrilled to support her daughter’s learning at home. I will continue to assess Daniela’s progress throughout the year

through formative, summative, and tri-annual standardized assessments. Being a transitional kindergartener plays to her advantage since she will be taking kindergarten again next year. If Daniela is unable to reach our end of the year goals, she will have the opportunity to get caught up next year as well. With her strong desire to learn, her mother's support, and the in-school support, Daniela will rise to the challenge of growing into a successful scholar and person.

Conclusion

These case studies have been instrumental in understanding my own personal growth and the growth of my scholars. Teaching can sometimes seem one sided. We expect so much from our scholars without anything in return. The best teachers are vulnerable with their students. They spend time getting to know them while also sharing information about themselves. Through my case studies I discovered the power of communication and building of trust as I connected with my scholars and their families. The knowledge I gained during this process has guided my teaching practice to foster a safe and positive learning environment, provide social and emotional supports through positive interactions with scholars, and use resources to enhance content-specific learning.

Beginning my teaching career, I prided myself on my ability to positively connect with my students and make them feel comfortable and safe in the classroom. Although I already knew that fostering a safe and positive learning environment is crucial for the success of a student both in and out of the classroom, I learned through these case studies so much more about the importance of maintaining a differentiated learning environment. I used to think that I could create a positive and safe learning environment for all scholars by providing the same supports. Through these case study, I discovered that all three of my focus students need different supports to help them feel safe in the classroom. I should never make assumptions about what a scholar needs, and instead take the time to understand what makes them feel safe and supported.

After meeting with all three families, I recognized a shift in my relationship with each child. Trust is the common theme amongst my relationship with all three of my scholars. As we got to know each other on a deeper level, each scholar felt more comfortable regularly approaching me and sharing their successes and concerns. They recognized that I wanted to help them through challenging emotional and social times. Getting to know each focus student on a personal level has helped me learn how I can support them emotionally and socially. Whether I provide a hand to hold in times of distress or support to independently problem solve in social situations, I recognize that my scholars need different emotional and social supports. My hope is to provide them with the tools to not only cope with their emotions and make positive social decisions inside of the classroom, but also in the real world.

These case studies helped me pinpoint my scholars' specific areas of academic strengths and weaknesses. Without these in-depth research, interviews, and observations, I believe I would not know my students' assets and needs as well. Because I know specifically where they struggle and succeed, I can create individualized resources for each scholar to succeed in school. As each scholar has different academic needs, they each need different resources either in or out of the classroom to push them in their academics. I have seen tremendous growth as I provide them with different content specific resources. What has become clear through the process of differentiation is that I must empower my scholars, especially those who are English learners, have an IEP, or have experienced trauma to empower and embolden their identities as successful life-long learners.

Although much time and effort were put into these case studies, I now realize how beneficial this process has been in getting to know my scholars' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, funds of knowledge, self-identity, and academic assets and needs. To be the best teacher I can be and support my scholars academic, social, and emotional needs, it is imperative that I take the time to

not only get to know them inside of the classroom, but also outside of the classroom. Their success in the classroom is directly related to my own efforts to know them on a personal level, and I must strive to forge this bond with each and every one of my scholars.

Part C: The Community, School and Classroom

The Community

If one were to Google image search Pico-Union, pictures of crime, gangs, police, and graffiti are the majority of the photos that would pop up to represent the community. Many people view this community as a dangerous and unsafe neighborhood. Growing up in Los Angeles, I frequently visited the Staples Center for concerts and sports games, but knew that on the other side of the freeway, danger lurked. Little did I realize that 15 years later, the neighborhood west of the freeway would be my new home away from home. My own stereotypes as well as those displayed on the internet projected Pico-Union to be an undesirable place to visit or work. My own judgments and stereotypes of this small neighborhood have been shattered as I have gotten to know my students, their families, and the vibrant, beautiful community full of culture.

As I drive down Alvarado Blvd at 6:25am on my way to work, I notice lights shining bright from many windows in apartment buildings. Many residents are preparing for their day, which is apparent as the streets are already filled with people hustling and bustling about. Sidewalks are consumed with people walking to work, waiting for the bus, setting up concession stands, or washing their faces and brushing their teeth in the park sinks. Being the fourth most crowded neighborhood in Los Angeles, Pico-Union has a population of 44,664 people residing in a 1.67 square mile radius, according to the U.S. Census. Additionally, Pico-Union is among the highest densities for the city of Los Angeles and for the country with 25, 352 people per square mile (Los Angeles Times, 2019).

My initial reaction to the abundance of people awake at such an early hour was a surprise. I never knew people woke up at such early hours in Los Angeles. This speaks to the community members in Pico-Union's dedication and hard work that goes unnoticed by the public. Instead of recognizing these individuals as doing everything in their power to provide for their families, people avert their eyes as they drive down the street and quickly try to run red lights, so they don't have to witness large homeless population, or so they won't be "stuck in a bad neighborhood." The more I learn about the Pico-Union neighborhood, I discover the injustices and challenges the neighborhood has faced over the years as a neighborhood that is home to predominately Latino immigrants: 85% according to the 2010 Census (Los Angeles Times, 2019).

With a high number of residents being foreign born, approximately 64%, there are 45% of residents are born in Mexico and 24% of residents are born in El Salvador. Mexican and Salvadorian are the most common ancestries, and thus, the predominate language spoken in Pico-Union is Spanish. Around 41% of residents do not speak English (City-Data, 2019). 50 years ago, many European and white people lived in the neighborhood, and thus the languages spoken have changed over time from English to Spanish.

Since many residents are immigrants from other countries, they are willing to work for less money, and thus 37% of Pico-Union's residents are living in poverty (City-Data, 2019). The median household income is \$26,424, and these percentages are high for the county. The median age of residents is 27, which is considered young for the city of Los Angeles, and only about 7% of residents 25 and older have a four-year degree.

On my drive home from work, I notice many young individuals on the sidewalk. I drive past strip malls, fast food restaurants, walls with graffiti on them, small locally run stores and businesses, churches and apartment buildings. Music blasts from the corners, and I witness many

people hanging outside on the sidewalks. On most corners, there are people selling food, purses, clothing and household items. This lends me to believe that there are not many grocery stores within the neighborhood, and many people get their food from either vendors or fast food restaurants. One service needed would be multiple cheap grocery stores such as Grocery Outlet. This would allow members of the community to access fresh produce and healthy food.

Located in central Los Angeles and west of Downtown Los Angeles, the Pico-Union neighborhood has greatly changed over the years. Originally known as Pico-Heights, this neighborhood was an exclusive, wealthy suburb where many elite white families lived in Craftsman homes. In the 1920's, the neighborhood became a melting pot as wealthy families relocated and many European working-class immigrants made Pico-Heights their home. By the 1970s, large numbers of working class Mexicans settled into the neighborhood as well as Central American immigrants (KCET, 2017). The community was predominately Latino, and the formally known Pico-Heights became known as Pico-Union.

Pico Union is known for its beautiful Craftsman style homes built in the early 1900s. Many of these homes have been converted into one to two bedrooms apartments. On average, there are about 7 people living in one apartment (City-Data, 2019). In addition to many Craftsman style homes, the Pico-Union area consists of many large apartment buildings as well as two homeless shelters in the Pico-Union area. Most all of my students live in apartment buildings in the Pico-Union neighborhood or its neighboring city Westlake. About half of my students live in walking distance, while the other half drive to school.

The 1970s marked a shift in the perception of this once suburb, to inner city community. As the density in population grew, less attention was given to the neighborhood as sidewalks began to crack, and buildings were overcrowded and rundown (KCET, 2017). With an influx of minority immigrants in the neighborhood who were willing to work for cheaper pay, economics

declined, poverty rates increased, crime increased and gangs emerged. The once heavily sought out neighborhood, turned into an undesirable place due to the large number of people of color that inhabited the neighborhood.

In the 1990s though many local residents, business owners, community activists and faith leaders worked together to address the forgotten and deteriorating neighborhood. A community plan was set in place to revitalize the neighborhood. Throughout the years, many organizations have taken root in the Pico-Union community to provide resources for immigrants and those living in poverty.

Within the community, there are many resources and services available in the community. A newly built Red Shield Salvation Army resides right across the street from Magnolia. It provides sports and fitness classes to children and adults, aquatics lessons, educational and learning resources and classes, and fine arts workshops and classes to children and adults. There are also two parks located in Pico-Union, with Macarthur Park right down the road, as well as Toberman Recreation Center that provides camps and organized sports activities. When resources are offered to children (i.e. tutoring, mentoring, or sporting activities) children are less likely to become affiliated with gangs (National Institute of Justice, 2013). These recreation centers are vital for the youth in Pico-Union, and I believe that the community could benefit from more parks and free structured activities such as sports, fine arts classes, or tutoring programs.

The Pico-Union community also has its own library that provides adult literacy programs, English proficiency programs, promotes literacy amongst families, and career online high school educations. Additionally, Pico-Union also has two homeless shelters in the neighborhood. With the high poverty rates in the area, I believe that Pico-Union could benefit from more long-term shelters.

Moreover, there are many churches in the neighborhood as religion plays a huge role in community life. Established in 1909, the Pico-Union Project is the oldest synagogue in Los Angeles. It has dedicated itself to the community and serves as multi-faith cultural arts center and house of worship (Pico-Union Project, 2019). They pride themselves on bringing diverse cultures together, and truly unites the Pico-union community. They hold community events regularly, including Faithsgiving, an event put on during Thanksgiving where farmers markets, arts, and yoga are available to community members for free.

The LA Promise Zone Initiative is a non-profit that has greatly benefitted the community. With the goal of creating and providing resources for members in the Pico-Union community, the LA Promise Zone includes leaders from government, local institutions, non-profits, and community organizations to create jobs, improve public education, enhance public safety, and incite better housing opportunities for the residents living in Pico-Union (LA Promise Zone, 2019). One other amazing resource in Pico-Union are the immigration help centers. Since many families are immigrants, they are subject to deportation, especially with our political climate these days. Organizations such as CARECEN and El Rescate provide legal services and support as well as education about immigration and people's rights as immigrants. These two organizations empower immigrants to improve their political and economic wellbeing and promote their participation in civic and economic life (El Rescate, 2019).

According to UCLA Labor Center, many members in the Pico-Union neighborhood work multiple jobs, work long hours, are informally self-employed, and rely on Day Labor Centers (UCLA Labor Center, n.d.). For my students and their families, their lives are no different. Many of my families are informally self-employed and run their own concession stands, shops, or are seamstresses. Other families work in construction or gardening through day labor centers. The scholars work extremely hard and long hours to provide for their children in order for them to

have the best life and education. Many parents do not have high school degrees, and have sacrificed their lives for the success of their children, even if that means facing grueling labor and work hours.

One of Pico-Union's assets is their collectivistic mindset. Members in the community will do anything to help out their own family members as well as other members in the community. Because Latino countries are considered to be more collectivistic, they prioritize the group over oneself. This is absolutely evident in the families at Magnolia as they value Magnolia's community and how they can support all of the students. Also, their strong familial ties serve as the community's assets. With many families living in poverty, they are able to stay united as a family and support them with every fiber of their being. I have felt honored to be welcomed into home as a new member of the community, and not once have I felt unwelcome.

Community events and community members

Anticipation built in our classroom as we talked about our International Day at Magnolia on December 15, 2018. Not only was International Day a huge event for the Pico-Union community, but it was also an important event for Magnolia as a school. International Day is a fundraising event where parents from Magnolia showcase their cultures through food and activities. All members of the Pico-Union are welcome to attend, and it is a way for community members to learn about the multitude of cultures within their own community. Booths are set up throughout the school where parents sell food, clothing, and bags from their native country. Exquisite smells wafted throughout the air as I walked by churros, tamales, cotton candy, soups, and so much more. I felt truly honored to have witnessed the cultural parade that took place as young children wore beautifully colored traditional clothes and garments. This has been a community and school tradition for the last four years, and continues to expand and grow each year.

On the day of the actual event, I almost arrived late due to the multitude of community events set in place. Because it was close to the holidays, I drove by one community event where firetrucks were lined up on the street delivering toys to a line of people. Someone at International Day informed me that this was an event that had taken place for years (conversation with community member, December, 15, 2018). It was a way for the Pico-Union community to get free clothes and food during the holidays when they might not be able to otherwise afford it.

Many community members that I spoke to were excited to attend International Day at Magnolia's new school. They were thrilled to have the school finally have its own location and vocalized that they would be returning next year. All of the individuals that I spoke with were Latino, and had many wonderful things to say about the neighborhood. Typically, their ages ranged from 30-38 years old, and they were so willing to talk to me about their community. Their passion for their community was evident as they felt so much pride for living in the Pico-Union area.

The community members insights about the community and services existing and needed directly correlate. As previously described, there are many services that the members of the Pico-Union community have access to. Many of my students access the parks, churches, and Red Shield Salvation Army. Some community members I spoke with find it difficult to pay the rising rent, which is why I believe housing prices should be lower. I do think there is a need for grocery stores, as previously mentioned, as well as more community and recreational areas such as parks. From talking with community members, they recognize that their community is not entirely safe (conversation with community member, December 15, 2018), but they come from higher impoverished communities that suffer from more serious criminal acts on a daily basis. They enjoy their community and find it comforting to be a part of a strong, welcoming, and hospitable neighborhood.

This is such a vibrant community, rich with culture, and although poverty permeates throughout the community, I find the question of “what services are missing,” to be challenging to answer. Viewing this community from a social justice lens, I am an outsider. I have dipped my toes into the vast pool of the Pico-Union community, but by no means can I proclaim what services are missing to the community. Who am I to ascertain what this community needs when I am not a part of the cultural community nor do I face the hardships and celebrations that they do every day. Making the assumption of what they need seems unjust and unfair as I may place my own biases upon this community. Although I have vocalized what services are missing, I am in no way exclaiming that my little time spent in the community makes me an expert, and thus qualified to say what the community needs.

I am however grateful that many of my students and their families attend community events held by our school as well as the community. Religion plays a huge role in my students and their families lives, and thus every Sunday many of my students attend church services. The most utilized community resource my scholars use are the parks. This is an opportunity for their family to bond and play outside, and generally it is the highlight of my scholars’ weekends. I also know that a few scholars use the Salvation Army to play sports and take art and music classes. This semester I plan to spend more time within the Pico-Union community. Pollock (2017) explains in his book *Schooltalk*, “spending time with young people in their communities as a key part of their training, to see youth as multifaceted and successful and to learn how to keep on learning to support them.” (p.174) I as an educator will only grow and become more self-aware when I explore my students’ actual experiences in their community. As I learn more about my students, their community, and cultural practices, I will be able to further enhance my work as their teacher and provide them with better support they need to succeed.

The connection between our school and local business continues to grow as Magnolia expands as a school. Local businesses have partnered with our school to provide resources for our families. Each month a family meeting is held that addresses a community need. In these meetings parents and guardians are provided parental resources that ways they can help their child develop academically and emotionally. They will also be bringing in organizations to discuss immigration and provide resources and support.

School site research

Magnolia Academy is a charter school located on the outskirts of downtown Los Angeles in the Pico Union neighborhood. It is located right off of the Olympic Boulevard exit from the 110 freeway. It is about a third of a mile west of the Staples Center and L.A. Live. Magnolia's campus is a brand new two-story building that was completed in September of 2018. Located in a residential neighborhood, the school is neighbors to homeless people and each morning is littered with trash. Outside of the school though, the sidewalk is hosed down each morning and swept so it is trash free. The new building brings a new and clean environment to the rather worn-down streets and neighborhood.

On the outside, it is painted in vibrant colors that give the neighborhood a fresh and hopeful vibe. The building is made of cement, and there are large windows surrounding the entire building on the first and second floor, which allow community members to see into the classrooms. These large windows let in much natural light into the building, and create a sense of curiosity amongst my students as they often look out the windows to explore the world around them. My personal favorite decorative piece in the building is the stained-glass window on the second floor that to me represents beauty and creativity.

Walking through the double doors of the building, you immediately enter into the foyer and are greeted by the office staff on your right. Magnolia prides itself on transparency, and thus

their office is an open room with cubicles as well as smaller private rooms whose walls are made of glass. Although when doors are closed and the conversations are private, one can always see inside of these offices of administration and the principal. Each floor is set up in a circular pattern. On the first floor, the kitchen, lunch room and multi-purpose room are located in the center of the building, while eight classrooms (kindergarten and second grade) surround the hallway. The ground is made with cement, and one can exit the building on either side of the hallway. These exits lead you to an outdoor space, which is used primarily for dismissal, physical education, and school events. There is a small on-site parking lot that holds around five cars that line the north side of the building.

There are two sets of stairways in the building, and both lead up to the first, third, and what will be next year fourth grade classrooms. The building is also equipped for students with disabilities as it has a ramp outside and elevator to access the second floor. On the second floor is the teachers' workroom with a copier, supplies, laminator, and refrigerator. The communications and technology department have their own offices upstairs as well. The building is on a small plot of land, and with over 400 students, it is impossible for everyone to meet together as a school.

Although one cannot get in from the outside due to the locked gates, it is easy for a student to exit the building unattended, if they are fast enough. This is one of the challenges with the building, as we recently had a student leave campus unattended for multiple hours. When students run fast enough, they can quickly exit the building and within a block can reach big streets with heavy traffic. Another challenge with the campus is that it is a closed campus with little outdoor space. There is no playground or grassy area for children to run around and play. With little outdoor space, there is not much opportunity for the children to play outside. I believe

that children need time and space to run around and play with their peers. Magnolia does not provide a time or space for this to happen.

The benefits to having a building on such a small plot of land, allow quick and easy access to classrooms. If there is an emergency on campus, one can access each classroom in a relatively short amount of time. Having a kitchen on campus, also allows the school to prepare hot meals for students' breakfast, lunch and dinner. Magnolia has installed security cameras and has a security guard on duty until 10pm every day. Because there is higher crime and homeless population in the neighborhood, this high security provides the school with extra support and safety.

Magnolia holds a high reputation in the Pico-Union community. After speaking with many parents and community members, they recognize the high rigor and academics provided at their school. With its mission to have all students graduate from a four-year college or university, many community members find this very appealing as many residents only attained a high school degree or less. One parent I spoke with explained that she specifically chose Magnolia because she wants her daughter to have the best education, succeed and go to college (conversation with parent, October, 18, 2018). She knows that Magnolia will be able to push her daughter academically and develop her emotional and social skills as well. Even though Magnolia is highly regarded in the community, many of the LAUSD public schools, do not feel the same way about Magnolia. They believe that it takes resources from the public schools, which in turn creates less support for their struggling students and teachers.

Being a public charter school in the Los Angeles Unified School District, we receive money from both the district, the state, and private funding. The school must follow and abide by all LAUSD guidelines and procedures as their funding is directly correlated with their success as a school. I personally feel very strange about working at a public charter school during the

LAUSD teacher strikes because I agree that charter schools do take away money from already lacking public schools.

Because Magnolia is an existing charter school, they are not affected by the new charter school measure set in place. With the new and approved two-year district hold on charter schools, we are uncertain about future Magnolia charter schools being opened. Two schools are still expected to be opened in 2020 and 2022 because they have already been approved by the district, however this could change once the charter bill goes to the state later this month. Much of Magnolia's success and existence depends upon the LAUSD district, and without them, they would not function as a school.

Magnolia commits themselves to building a strong foundation and representation for their students by hiring teachers of color and members of the LGBTQ community. Many of their teachers were EL students and are members of the LGBTQ community, and students have a greater chance of succeeding when their role models are similar to them. For the four existing Magnolia charter schools, there are two school psychologists who provide support for students that struggle behaviorally or have experienced significant life events. Students meet with the counselors weekly in order to receive extra support and coping strategies outside of the classroom. Magnolia also has a Special Education program set in place that provides supports for students and their families with special needs and IEPs. Within each grade level, there is a special education support person who works closely in specific classrooms to provide academic and behavioral support for students with special need and IEPs. The school also provides one to one aides for individuals that needs the one-on-one support in the classroom.

Embedded within the curriculum are ways of differentiation for EL scholars. Evertson and Emmer (2013) posit that reinforcing key points through visual aids helps EL students succeed (p. 230). Teachers at Magnolia are encouraged to make anchor charts with their scholars to provide

visuals, and in lower grades such as kindergarten, teachers must display a word wall to enhance student vocabulary. Many of the gifted scholars at Magnolia are EL scholars. At Magnolia, they have the opportunity to learn in different grade levels, which follows the idea that “high ability students learn more when they are challenged.” (Evertson and Emmer, 2013, p. 235) With the opportunity to learn in different classrooms, gifted scholars are not only provided with differentiated material, but also increasingly challenging instruction as they are able to frequently attend a higher-grade level instruction. For example, one of my scholars who is reading at a second-grade level, goes to first grade for reading groups, and receives appropriate instruction for his reading level.

Technology is also an integral part of our school day at Magnolia. Our school is a one-to-one school for technology. Each student has their own MacBook Chrome, and in our class, the students use them daily to enhance their knowledge of math and reading through online programs. With an entire technology department’s offices upstairs, we are able to quickly call them for any technological problems that we experience throughout the day. As a teacher, I have received my own personal computer to use for planning, preparation, and curriculum instruction. Within the classroom, each teacher has a smart board, overhead projector and document camera to further enhance our instruction.

Morale in the school among students, teachers, and staff is influenced by informal school policies that are enforced daily. Each morning teachers meet for ten minutes to discuss daily updates and share students’ successes or struggles. This time spent each morning sets the tone for the upcoming day and allows teachers to express their gratitude for one another or frustration with certain practices set in place. Once this “morning huddle” ends, teachers go to their assigned “posts” and wait to greet each student that passes them. Before a scholar enters their classroom, they are happily greeted by at least three adults in the morning. As they reach the

door, I am there to greet them and collect their homework. I have found these informal salutations instrumental in getting to know and gain the trust of my students. Using these small moments as a way to check in with each scholar before the day starts, I am able to grasp who may need extra support throughout the morning. With smiles spreading across their faces, our scholars genuinely value and cherish the small moments they receive in the morning, and it is these moments that make them feel seen and valued throughout the day.

Having previously worked at a K-12 private school, the cliques between teachers were just as powerful as the cliques between students. At Magnolia though, I have never once felt a sense of discomfort around my colleagues. Each teacher and staff member genuinely cares about one another. This is evidenced when someone experiences a loss in their life, hardship, or celebrates a birthday. On my birthday for example, the entire school of teachers and staff signed a birthday card and decorated my room. These small moments make me feel valued and cared about by my colleagues.

Rules and structure guide students, teachers, staff and parents at Magnolia. Research shows that when children have structure and support, especially when coming from low income homes, they are more likely to thrive and succeed (Evertson et. al, 2012, p. 231). Because most students at Magnolia are from low-income backgrounds, they implement disciplined structure into their daily routines and practices to prepare their scholars for success and college. Students wear uniforms daily, so they look neat, professional, and scholarly. Teachers must also abide by a strict and professional dress code in order to set examples for their scholars. When walking in the hallways students must walk in single file lines and at a level zero (e.g. no talking). This minimizes distractions and time spent walking in the hallway, which in turn, increases instructional time. As a school that is centered around rigorous instruction, many of the rules and practices set in place have been created to maximize instruction and learning time.

As previously mentioned, parents must volunteer for a total of 40 hours throughout the school year. Parents are held to high standards and all parent volunteers undergo formal training, so they know Magnolia's procedures and protocols. One rule the school enforces is that students must have a hall pass when they leave class. When students are alone in the hallway, parents, teachers, and staff will be able to recognize if this student is allowed to be outside of class unattended or if they left class without permission. Inside of the classroom, students and teachers communicate with sign language and nonverbal cues, so as not to disrupt lessons. Students use these signs to use the bathroom, drink water, throw away trash, take off sweaters, and teachers use nonverbal cues to get students attention. Although I feel as if there are too many rules and procedures at Magnolia, I understand the importance of structure for students who may not have any structure in their home life. I have seen firsthand the benefits of these procedures, and how students have learned to respect both parents and teachers that enforce these rules.

School mission and demographics

In 2009, Ana Melgares¹⁰ founded Magnolia Academy. It served 120 students in grades K-1. Ana, who was a fellow for Building Excellent Schools in 2007 created Magnolia with a powerful idea: "to provide a structured, achievement-based community that prepares students to graduate from four year-colleges and universities." (Equitas Academy, 2019). This mission influences the school's values and guides Magnolia Academy's work every day. Magnolia has now grown to four different schools with two elementary schools and two middle schools. Their goal is to operate at least five schools that support over 2,000 students by 2020. Magnolia aims to ensure a high-quality education for more students in the Pico-Union area of Los Angeles.

¹⁰ Pseudonym to protect the name of the founder

Magnolia has built an innovative, successful and engaging public education program using their mission to guide their key foundational beliefs, values, and practices to help students succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. The school integrates the values of high expectations, college readiness, a family partnership, and building a safe and supportive school community into their short term and long-term success as a school (Equitas Academy, 2019). With these four tenets driving their mission, Magnolia strives to instill a passion for lifelong learning that challenges students to think critically about the world, and ultimately prepares students to graduate from four-year colleges and universities.

Transparency is one of Magnolia's key values, and this is made clear to parents, students, and teachers. The school makes their mission public through this transparency as they answer and respond to all questions from members of the Magnolia community as well as the Pico Union community. While driving in the Pico-union neighborhood, one will see a large billboard advertising Magnolia and their school mission. Magnolia prides itself on this mission, and has become well known in the community as a rigorous school that supports all students in their learning and challenges them to become critical thinkers and good community members. With more than 50% of their residents attaining less than a high school degree and 20% of residents attaining a high school degree (City-Data, 2019), the residents of Pico-Union find hope in the school's mission statement that all students will graduate from college or universities.

Not only does Magnolia have a rigorous academic curriculum, but they also believe in developing the whole child emotionally and socially through their core values that are incorporated into the classroom every day. The Magnolia's core values come from the book, *How Children Succeed*, by Paul Tough. These values include curiosity, optimism, gratitude, grit, self-control, social intelligence, zest and are incorporated and taught to every scholar in every class.

Magnolia school is a growing school that currently serves around 400 scholars in grades kindergarten to third grade. Next year, their school will reach its full capacity as they add a fourth grade and serve 500 students. There are 225 scholars are girls while 175 are boys. As the scholars entered the 2018-2019 school year, their ages ranged from four years old to eight years old. The student demographics include: 93% Hispanic, 5% African American, and 2% White, of which 42% are English Learners who speak Spanish as their primary language, 1.5% are foster youth, .04% are homeless, and 96% qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Magnolia prides itself on their diverse faculty and administration. Magnolia's faculty is comprised of lead teachers and instructional assistants with over 60% fluent Spanish speakers. Women dominate the school as 90% of the faculty are female while 10% are male, and 75% of administration are female while only 25% are male. Although the gender demographics are not as diverse, ethnically the school is one of the most diverse schools I have ever worked. Around 48% of the faculty are Hispanic, 40% are white and 12% are African American. Around 50% of administration are Hispanic, 40% are white, and 10% are Asian. Magnolia has a very young staff as their ages range from 22 to 38 with an average age mean of 30 years. Members of the administration tend to be a little bit older with an average age of 34. Working at a school with predominately younger individuals as well as a female principal and founder has truly empowered me to feel as if my accomplishments and successes are possible. These strong women have absolutely shown me that age is simply a number, and with hard work and determination one can accomplish their dreams.

Magnolia Charter School #3 was developed in the year of 2015. Thus, their original kindergarten class is now in third grade, so they do not yet know the rate where most students attend high school. They do however strive to prepare 100 percent of their students to attend high school and ultimately, four year colleges or university.

The school's mission and values are integrated into my classroom culture daily. Each classroom is assigned a college name at the beginning of the school year, and thus my classroom is named Whitman College after my alma mater. At the beginning of the school year, I showed my class what Whitman looks like and where it is located. We regularly sing our Whitman College cheer in class, and perform this cheer each week during our community meeting. Talking about going to college is a norm in our classroom, and the walls are covered in educational materials related to our college mascot and scholars' success. Our reading level, sight word, and counting trackers all correlate to the Whitman mascot, and scholars enthusiastically approach me daily asking if they can read and count for me. A once extrinsic motivational tracker has shifted into an intrinsic motivation. Scholars genuinely love learning, and this is evident in their growth just within this trimester.

Because Magnolia's curriculum is extremely rigorous, and in my opinion not developmentally appropriate for kindergarteners, I make sure to emphasize this rigor to my scholars. During lessons with advanced vocabulary, I reiterate how they are learning words that college students use. On multiple occasions, many scholars' parents have told me that their child emphasizes that they will be attending Whitman College when they grow up. This emphasis in the classroom directly translates into their beliefs and ideas about their future. During a recent conversation with a scholar's parent, she told me that as they were in the hospital the doctor asked her son what grade he was in. He proudly exclaimed, "I am in college! I go to Whitman College!" (conversation with parent, February, 7, 2019). Although my scholar's inaccuracies were comical to an outsider, his determination and confidence about being in and going to college will guide his success as a hard-working individual.

Additionally, every morning my class engages in our morning meeting where a specific Magnolia value is explicitly taught and discussed in depth. As scholars develop these values,

they are gaining positive character traits that will help them succeed in life. I make connections to how these values help students succeed as people and thrive in college. Throughout the day I try to incorporate these values into our daily lessons, and praise or highlight scholars who demonstrate these values. Each week our school celebrates an individual scholar who embodies the schools mission and values during our community meeting. Being chosen as a “star scholar” is an exciting and proud moment for not only the scholar, but also for their families, and so all family members are invited to attend our community meeting. When selected, scholars feel empowered and honored as leaders in their classroom and receive a certificate as the weekly “star scholar”.

Most all students thrive on campus. Although the curriculum is rigorous and often dry, Magnolia trains their teachers to place emphasis on creating visual aids, using many call and responses, and provides many opportunities for turn and talks and language development. These strategies have been incorporated into the curriculum due to the high number of EL scholars at Magnolia. I have noticed EL scholars thrive in my classroom not only because they are continuously exposed to academic language, but also because they have many opportunities to learn through visual aids. As I incorporate songs and dance into the curriculum, my scholars tend to learn the material much more quickly.

Scholars with behavioral issues can be successful at Magnolia, however I would not consider them to thrive. Magnolia’s tiered behavioral plan set in place has many flaws and works more as a band aid for those scholars who are truly struggling. Magnolia tends to quickly fix behavioral problems, but these problems continue to arise due to the lack of support and intervention strategies for new teachers. As a new teacher this year, I have needed to develop my own behavioral plans for my struggling scholars, and fortunately my adjustments and knowing my scholars have helped me succeed. Luckily, my prior experiences and knowledge in the classroom

made me successful. For fellow colleagues who are brand new teachers with little experience, they have struggled much more. Magnolia needs a better system of guidance for new coaches to teach them how to manage scholars with severe behavior. As teachers learn strategies to implement in their own classrooms, I believe all students, or at least more students, will become successful at Magnolia.

Magnolia values parental involvement and believes that parents and the school are partners in their child's education, and they must work together to ensure success. Families are encouraged to volunteer for 40 participation hours a year. Magnolia families can earn participation hours by attending family workshops, school meetings, daily duties and tasks at school, fundraising efforts, take home projects, and donations. Magnolia wants to make family participation accessible for all families, which is why they provide many opportunities both in and out of school that cater to the families work schedules. Family meetings with the school create a strong sense of communication among school and family. Magnolia truly values the interests, input, and concerns about the school, and tries to build this trust with the families daily.

Classroom Exploration

Upon entering my classroom, many people immediately identify that I teach kindergarten. My walls are filled with brightly colored print, and on my bulletin board, I have displayed samples of student work. My students' desks are set up in groups of four or three desks per group, with a total of seven table groups. We have a multi-colored rug, with square spaces for each student. This rug faces the whiteboard and smart board. Our walls contain the alphabet, a sight word wall that is updated weekly, reading, counting, sight word, and online educational program trackers to track student success.

We also have a class library with labeled books corresponding to student reading level. I have brought in my own personal library to provide additional books for students. Allyn and

Morrell (2014) state that “engaged reading translates into higher achievement,” and also “literacy is also a key predictor of children’s high school graduation rates and colleges success.” (p.18)

When students enjoy the books they read, they are more likely to continue reading these stories.

In my classroom, I place a heavy emphasis on the importance and love of reading. I encourage my students to find books that interest them, and not just books that they are supposed to read.

Three other important aspects of my classroom are my kidney table, computer cart, and resources cabinet. At my kidney table, I provide intervention to struggling students. Even though this is used for intervention, many of my students want to work at this private table in order to feel more supported and valued by me, their teacher. We use our computer cart daily to enhance instruction through online educational programs. Our resources cabinet is where I keep blending puzzles, math puzzles, and fun games for students to work on during centers and our choice time. Most all of my students would prefer to learn than play, and often can be seen counting to 100 or playing sight word Bingo with their peers. Their dedication to their own education is truly inspiring.

My mission as a multiple subject’s teacher is to engage, inspire, support and encourage my students by fostering a safe and inclusive environment to educate them academically, socially, and emotionally, and ultimately build a foundation for lifelong learning. In order to create this environment, I emphasize respect: respect amongst each other, respect from me to my students, and respect from my students to me. Responsibility is a key aspect in my classroom, and I hold my students accountable for their own learning and provide the tools and support for them to succeed. Student connection is extremely important to me, so I use many opportunities throughout the day to get to know my students on a personal level and discover their interests, strengths, and weaknesses. At least once a week, I eat lunch with different scholars to build a

personal connection with them. I have also gotten to know each students' families, and communicate directly and often about their child's progress, successes, and struggles.

In order to ensure that my classroom feels welcoming and safe for students, I have an area designated for scholars that are having difficult days. At the beginning of the year, many scholars missed their parents, and I normalized crying in our classroom. Emphasizing empathy and support amongst my scholars, they always lend a helping hand to those that are having tough days. We have two designated comfort stuffed animals for individuals to hold as support. For my scholars that need a little extra love, I provide hugs whenever necessary, and let them know that they can take short breaks to refocus or write a letter to their parent.

When issues arise between students in my class we use a strategy known as "the peace path." At the beginning of the year I modeled what this looked like. When a scholar does something another scholar does not like, they use their words to tell them that they did not like that action and why. The other scholar must then apologize, and the hurt scholar can choose to accept or not accept their apology. This technique has empowered my students to feel safe in our classroom as they have learned to advocate for themselves and solve their own problems.

Having students feel safe and welcome in class is directly how I address social-emotional learning in my classroom. All voices are valued and heard in my classroom, so whenever students wish to talk to me privately or address the entire class, I always give them the floor. When students are able to express their feelings to another person, they are more likely to internalize and understand their own feelings. By using "the peace path" and having students address their emotional needs head on, I hope to have built a culture in my classroom where expressing yourself is encouraged.

My students' assets and needs are vast and varied. About one third of my class attended school before kindergarten and have been exposed to books in their household. Two thirds of

students have not attended school before kindergarten, and amongst these students, many of their parents have not received a formal education or anything past an elementary education. As these students are learning new information in my class, so are their parents.

Linguistically, most students' primary language is Spanish. Although their primary language is Spanish, they are bilingual and all speak and understand English. Because of this, I try to incorporate Spanish as much as possible into each lesson. We count in Spanish, and I often rely on them to teach me words in Spanish. During my lessons, I incorporate and build on students' cultural resources as we make connections with words in English to their counterpart word in Spanish. Linguistically, the students are still developing in their native language as well as English, so I develop many opportunities for communication throughout my lessons. Through cooperative learning, scholars develop linguistically by talking to their peers, which allows for more exposure to the language as well as informal academic language and speaking skills to be acquired. Because all of my students are developing language it is extremely important that they are able to talk and listen to each other during lessons.

As many children entered the classroom with no knowledge of reading or math, many of these children have learned quickly throughout the year. For my students that still struggle to read and count, I pull small groups for intervention, and practice blending, exposure to sounds, academic language, writing practice, and number recognition. I have noticed a significant increase in their academic skills as they gain confidence in their own academic abilities.

With 26 total scholars in my class, I have 12 boys and 13 girls. 12 of these students are English Learners, while 17 of these students speak both Spanish and English. No students have been identified as GATE. However, one scholar who was a transitional kindergartener last year at Magnolia, and now a kindergartener is performing at a second-grade level, and I believe that he is gifted. Fortunately, there is fluid movement of scholars in between classrooms, so he is able

to be a part of a first-grade reading group. I also provide differentiated instruction for him in math as he is being introduced to first grade concepts, and is able to apply these skills. I have no students with 504 plans, but one of my students has an IEP. My FS2 Adrian receives occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. In the classroom, I provide preferential seating both on the rug and at his table, so he is placed in seats that will minimize distractions. Adrian also takes assessments in areas that are free from distraction.

Although I have not worked in many schools, specifically public charter schools, I believe that the school provides many resources to their students and teachers. We are one-to-one campus when it comes to technology. In every single classroom, there are MacBook Chrome computers for each and every student. Teachers have access to their own computers, provided by the school, as well as an overhead projector, document camera, and a smartboard. There is also a technology team that solves many technological problems quickly and effectively. With regards to extra adult in my classroom, I have para educators who support during reading groups and math for four out of five days a week, and this is consistent across every classroom at Magnolia. Each and every person working at Magnolia also has a coach. My coach specifically helps me with behavioral and curriculum support, and observes me teach at least once a week. We meet weekly for one on one meetings to debrief her observations and discuss my questions, and identify my strengths and areas for growth. While working at Magnolia, I have never felt as if I could not turn to my coach or principal to reach out for help and suggestions.

Parents at Magnolia are required to support the school through 40 hours of community service each year. One way to complete this is through volunteering during the school day. Although I do not specifically have a need for parent volunteers in my classroom, they have helped me tremendously by making copies, laminating, and preparing materials for my class.

Parent volunteers also support on field trips, and their engagement is vital for the success of my classroom and our school.

At Magnolia, the teachers follow the set curriculum of Achievement First. Every lesson is provided and easily accessible in the school's Google Drive. Along with having a set curriculum for reading, math, social studies, and science, the school has an elementary curriculum coordinator that provides resources, professional development, and classroom observations and support. Although this curriculum is very rigid, and I find somewhat not developmentally appropriate for Kindergarteners, I have discovered that within the curriculum there is opportunity to divert from certain lessons and teach the content based on my students' assets and needs. Because the curriculum is provided, many of the lessons require different kinds of resources, and Magnolia does a wonderful job of providing these resources to their students and teachers. In my classroom, I have math manipulatives, dice, pencils, crayons, glue sticks, a complete library with leveled guided reading books, writing journals, word blending puzzles, and read aloud stories. What impressed me about Magnolia is that I have never struggled to acquire certain material because we also have a spending allowance for our classroom.

Although resources are abundant at Magnolia, there are other aspects of the school that are lacking. There is no outside play area, including a jungle gym for the students to play on. Because our school does not have recess, there doesn't seem to be a need to have a play structure, but to me this seems like a fundamental flaw with the resources provided at the elementary school. Students and young children develop and grow through play. They are able to build relationships, engage in imaginary play, problem solve, and physically be active when they are able to participate in recess.

Another resource that the school lacks is their ability to plan when teacher and staff absence occur. For the entire first semester, instead of calling in a sub for when a teacher was absent, they

would pull an enrichment teacher or para support from different classrooms. This would mean that the classrooms that they supported throughout the day would lack the support of another adult. I have noticed that this greatly affected reading groups, as some of my students did not participate in reading groups when their support teacher was covering for another absent teacher.

With Magnolia being a very structured school, they require us to enforce and introduce many routines and procedures from day one. In my classroom, we have routines and procedures for greeting the teacher, turning in homework and entering the classroom. Each morning I greet my students at my door. This greeting sets the tone for the day. Students then enter the classroom, put their backpacks on their designated hook, and either eat breakfast or begin morning work in their writing journal. I set high expectations for my students right as they enter the classroom. In order to hold them to high expectations, I use a clip chart system to enforce behavioral consequences and successes throughout the day. All students begin the day on great and can move up to brilliant. They may also move down on the clip chart to needs improvement and then unacceptable throughout the day depending on their behavior. When scholars incorporate Magnolia's core values, show leadership, or help out a fellow peer, I have them move their clip up to reinforce this positive behavior. I also have them move their clip down when they have trouble following directions, are very disruptive to the class, or are unkind to their peers. When scholars move their own clips up or down, they are able to internalize their positive or negative behaviors and either continue to set examples or change their behavior throughout the day.

I am very clear with scholars about how to ask for help. I emphasize independence as they work individually, and thus when they get stuck, there are procedures set in place for them to follow. First, they must show grit and try the problem again. If this is too challenging, then I encourage them to ask a table partner for help. My tables are strategically set up with high, medium, and low achieving scholars so that they can learn from each other. If they are unable to

find the answer from their peer, then they may raise their hand, and ask me for assistance. Their levels of independence have significantly increased throughout the school year as they utilize their peers more often and trust themselves when coming across a challenging problem.

During these past five months, I have learned so much about myself as a person and teacher, and this personal growth has been influenced by my induction in the Pico-Union Community. As Pollock (2017) explains about seeing communities for their fuller context, he proclaims that “people look through a paper towel roll at a given “culture” and explain student achievement as just a result of assumed activity inside the group.” (p.181) If one only views a certain community based on simple judgments, they are not fully understanding what the community has to offer. By attending community events and working in the neighborhood, I have discovered how much more Pico-Union has to offer. Pollock goes on to explain that one must “always recognize how learning more about families’ and students’ experiences outside *and inside* their schools could improve their own work with students.” (p.185), and I completely agree. Without taking the time to learn about my students, families, and their community, I would not be as valuable or successful as a teacher. I forged bonds of trust with individuals who 15 years ago, I would never have guessed, they would be integral and influential people in my life.

I have never met a group of such caring and hardworking individuals. Instead of running away or quickly driving through the crime ridden Pico-Union, I am proud to drive down the vibrant streets, and excited hope to see my scholars and their parents walking to work on the street. This lower income community has open my world to the injustices placed upon immigrants and minority people, but has also shown me that these individuals do not live their life pitying themselves, and why should they. Their grit and resilience is truly inspiring and I am lucky to call the people I have met my colleagues, students, and friends.

Part D: Analysis of Teacher Effectiveness

The Whole Class Perspective

Class progress.

Growing exponentially as a class since the beginning of the school year, my students are eager to learn and help each other succeed. At the beginning of the school year, many of my students were underperforming across the disciplines. 21 of my students were reading at a level AA while one was reading at a level A. With 26 students in my class, the majority of them started off the year with little to no knowledge of how to read. They have drastically grown as a class, and now, most all students are performing at or above grade level. At the beginning of the year, many of my students started off below grade level and did not have any knowledge in reading, writing or math. Their skills were limited as many of them had not been exposed to the structure and expectations of school. With their parents support and their excitement to learn, my students have flourished academically, socially and emotionally.

Many of my students met their math MAP goals on their winter assessment, while only approximately 10 reached their reading MAP goals. Although this was disheartening, especially upon hearing that their scores were not at Magnolia's standard of achievement, I was down on myself as a teacher. I do not however believe that standardize tests highlight and reveal a student's overall success in the classroom, and I think this runs true with my class. The information I discuss below emphasizes my students' successes, as there are many, and also their areas for growth.

First and foremost, I believe that fostering a love for learning has created a space where my students feel comfortable making mistakes and want to challenge themselves academically. My expression and desire for learning has not only increased their curiosity, but has also shaped their ideas about learning as an intrinsic motivation instead of extrinsic motivating factor. I have

expressed my own desire for learning, knowledge and curiosity, and my students crave this same passion.

Passion is not the only driving factor in their success. I have provided many extrinsic motivating opportunities to succeed in order to create an intrinsic motivational learning experience. I create table points for each table based on their focus, success, and kindness, and at the end of the month, the table with the most points receives a prize. I have also created a culture where failure and success are both celebrated in my classroom. When students struggle academically, they send each other love and support, and help each other during their free time to rise up to every challenge. We also celebrate reading successes by making a huge ordeal in the classroom when someone passes a reading level. Students not only receive a certificate, but also a whole class shout out and recognition for their success and growth. This has propelled all students in my class to grow academically and move their tracker up as they grow academically in math, reading, and sight word knowledge.

Reading.

At the beginning of the school year, eight students knew all of their letters and sounds, while 19 students did not know any letters and sounds. For the last couple of months, we have been learning our letters, sounds, and sight words, and at this point in year, 23 out of 26 students know all of their letters and sounds. Students understand that sounds make up letters, letters make up words, and words make up sentences. They also know how to blend sounds to figure out short vowel CVC words. Most all students at the beginning of the year were reading at a AA level, and now 12 scholars have met their end of the year reading goal, while most of the rest of scholars are on track to reaching the end of the year goal by reading at a level D. My students' love for reading is tangible as they eagerly wait for reading groups and exclaim, "I love reading!"

Currently, our area of growth as a class is knowing sight words. 9 students know 90 sights

words and above, while 14 students are far below sight word knowledge at this point in the year. Although this does not fully indicate my students' success, it is a foundational skill that will hinder their success as first graders if they do not learn and know the Fry's 150 sight words by the end of the year.

Math.

My scholars' knowledge about mathematical concepts and their connection to the real world have drastically improved since the beginning of the year. At the beginning of the year, only five of my students could count to 100, and could not count objects using one to one, now only four scholars cannot count to 100. After the first math quiz of the year, only two students (8%) passed at grade level. On the fourth quiz of the year, my students' scores jumped so that an average of 16 students (about 60%) were grasping and understanding concepts at grade level. Currently, 70% of students are performing at or above grade level with regards to math. We have administered two interim assessments this year and about 69% of students are reaching grade level performance. Although I would prefer 100% success, I always remind myself to think about the success of my students from the beginning of the year.

Writing.

At the beginning of the year, many of my students could not write, let alone complete a full thought or sentence. As the year has progressed, their ability to express themselves, sound out their words, and write neatly has greatly improved. Many of my students now understand the importance of planning before writing in order to solidify their thoughts. They use our pre-writing time to plan out their actual writing pieces, and their knowledge of blending and segmenting words has influenced their ability to successfully write relatively cohesive sentences. As a class, we are still striving to use finger spaces, sound out words, and use punctuation correctly, but our growth in writing has created curious and passionate writers.

Student progress.

Much of my student's growth and success cannot be quantified by data. My students have developed a sense of kindness and progressed in their socio emotional learning and support for one another. When scholars struggle or have a hard day, most all students are quick to rush to their side to provide support. Although this now reveals itself to be a distraction to our learning, I admire their open hearts and cannot fault them for supporting their classmate in need. On any given day, you will find students testing each other or supporting one another in their own academics. They have become confident in their own abilities to either ask for help from a friend or share their knowledge with struggling student.

Academically, my students' attention to one another during discussion has grown significantly. During many lessons, I have explained why we pay attention to each other as they as speaking, and finally within the last week, this idea has clicked. Many students are now "tracking the speaker", and are even able to articulate, when prompted, to repeat their peers' ideas in their own words. This shows developing their listening skills takes time to nurture. Along with these listening skills, scholars build from one another's conversation without my prompting, and eagerly await to add to their peers' ideas and share their ideas with the rest of the class. My students have grown exponentially as writers, readers, and mathematicians, and I cannot wait to see their progress at the end of the year.

The Individual Student Perspective**Focus Student 1: John Rodriguez**

An outgoing individual, John is always surrounded by his peers. He is the center of attention and craves personal interaction with his friends any moment he can get. This has lent itself to being John's biggest hurdle this year as he often gets distracted and is more focused on his peers than his learning. Although his chattiness in class distracts himself, his peers, and me, he has not

let this get in the way of his success as a learner. As a TK, he is performing at a kindergarten grade level in math and reading. His comfortability has grown in our class, and his desire to participate in lessons has increased. His contributions have become more and more meaningful and relatable when answering questions and he is has become much more confident, dare I say, cocky in his academic abilities.

Social development.

John's bubbly personality is one of his many strengths. Supportive of his peers' academic successes, he always wants to know what's going on with everyone in our class. He has fostered a close group of friends that care deeply about him inside and outside of the classroom. He has become more open to communicating with peers he feels less comfortable with. He has learned how to become more of an independent problem solver and directly talks to his peers when an issue arises. He does still rely on my support as he occasionally interrupts me as I work with other students, and he is still learning to use kindness when interacting with his peers.

I believe that my strategy of incorporating modeling proper social interactions has helped with his development this year. He articulates what he likes and does not like, and he is more successful when solving problems. Even though this strategy was beneficial, I do not think that it was extremely successful because I did not model certain important social interactions that could have helped John grow. For example, he sometimes uses negative or mean language when talking about or to other scholars. Although I have addressed this with him as well as the whole class, I think I should have provided more time to practice uncomfortable scenarios in order for scholars to put themselves in one another's shoes.

Academic development.

Academically John's MAP assessment scores do not reflect his academic success in the classroom. I have noticed that he rushes through his work, and does not take as much pride in his

work as he once previously did. He knows that he is smart and a quick learner, and I think this has led him to not devote himself as much to his studies. Because of this his success on the MAP assessment was not strong as he rushed through each question without me noticing before it was too late.

Math.

John is performing at grade level mathematically. He can count to 100 with ease, recognizes how to count objects, identifies one more or less of a number, recognize shapes, and has grown in his algebraic thinking and operations. Demonstrating knowledge of mathematical skills and concepts on his most recent interim assessment, he proven to be proficient in the content learned in class. His one area of weakness is measurement, and so I would like to continue to reteach this concept as many students struggled in this area.

His MAP assessment scores do not reflect his growth in math. On his MAP assessment, his scores slightly increased, however, his percentile decreased to 29 (See Figure 5A, Appendix A). Solving math stories is one of his greatest areas of growth in math. Often, he knows the answer to the math problems, however, he does not know how to solve them (See Figure A6, Appendix A) as he correctly identifies the total number of objects, but cannot solve to find the answer. I would like to push John to find meaning in his work as he explores and learns new mathematical concepts.

Reading.

Reading is one of John's greatest strengths. By November, John knew all of his letters and sounds, and was able to blend CVC words with ease. His blending knowledge has helped as he learns rules about silent E, vowel teams, and diagraphs. John is now reading at a level C, and knows 40 sight words. He needs to continue to work on his sight word knowledge in order to quickly recognize and read words in more challenging texts. His comprehension and independent

reading skills have improved dramatically since the beginning of the year.

Reviewing the winter MAP assessment for reading, I realize how standardized tests do not fully indicate a student's success in the classroom. After completing seven questions, I asked John if he could hear what the test was asking. He confidently said, "no." Unfortunately this served as a great detriment and influenced his score significantly as he went down from his score in the fall. He is now placed at the 9th percentile, and although this is extremely low, I truly believe that he will flourish on the next assessment in the spring.

Writing.

Writing is John's major areas of growth in the next coming months. He is able to sound out words and write them with my persistent reminders, however when working on his own, he struggles to take time when writing his words. He is still developing in sounding out all letters in each word as he writes them. I have noticed a vast improvement on his ability to respond to a prompt. Originally, he would write solely about his own interests and thoughts while disregarding the directions. Now, as he works at a table with more focused individuals, he is able to produce more legible writing samples that respond to the prompt (See Figure 7A, Appendix A).

Funds of knowledge and challenges.

In class I have incorporated more English and Spanish language development to help John, and my other EL students, gain knowledge of both languages. As we recite our numbers in English and Spanish, I have noticed John using Spanish more in the classroom. As previously mentioned, John's mother was concerned that he was not speaking Spanish at home, but now she has expressed his comfortability speaking the language. I encourage all students to speak in English and Spanish, and I think for John, this has helped him become more connected to his culture and first language.

John's parents provide many opportunities for him to explore and learn outside of the classroom. Their dedication to expose John to the world around him has translated into his curiosity in the classroom. I often ask my students what they did over the weekend, and John's responses inspire me to connect more lessons to our surrounding area and activities to get students excited about exploring Los Angeles. I use John's knowledge to help others understand their possibilities in the greater Los Angeles area.

Missing a lot of school due to illness has been a challenge out of my control this semester. Fluid filled up in John's lungs, which caused him to be hospitalized and almost take a leave of absence from school. Fortunately, the situation was not dire enough to keep him out of school, however, once a month he does spend the night in the hospital receiving treatment to prevent further illness. His mother's proactive dedication and communication has helped me support John from home by providing additional resources and supports for his parents as I guide them in helping John keep up with his school work.

Action plan progress.

John's action plan has propelled him to succeed academically, however only partially allowed for social success as previously mentioned during his social development. One strategy that has proved to be successful for John has been incorporating visual aids, which has been proven in research on EL learners (Evertson et al., 2012, p. 233). As his mom previously vocalized, he is a visual learner, and this has proven to be accurate. During videos and my own creation of visual aids, John is highly engaged, He enthusiastically participates when reading stories from Starfall, and loves the catchy songs incorporated into educational videos. This has definitely translated into his success with regards to math and reading.

Reading has been one of John's strongest growths throughout the year. During reading groups John no longer needs the support of visual aids to help him blend CVC words, silent E,

and words with vowel teams. In my previous action plan, I vocalized how I wanted to continue to model how to read during reading groups. I have incorporated whisper reading to allow for productive academic struggle. John has taken on this challenge, and I believe this independent reading has helped him grow into a confident reader.

Revised action steps for this and next year.

In his revised action plan, I would really like to emphasize how to help him prepare for an online formal assessment, increase his focus, provide him with more opportunities for writing, and give him more opportunities to grow socially and emotionally. Based off of his math and reading scores on the MAP assessment, I would like to provide him with more practice test like situations to prepare him to take the next standardize test. As one who did not thrive on standardize tests, I understand the difficulties in demonstrating one's knowledge in one single assessment. I think with a few months of test preparation and expectations, he will not only understand the significance in this cumulative assessment, but also feel more prepared to slowly and confidently answer each question.

I would recommend that John be seated next to focused students who are dedicated to their studies. Through modeling, these students will implicitly show John the importance of focus and importance of taking pride in one's work. Also incorporating writing opportunities throughout the day will increase John's writing skills. I would recommend pulling him for small group intervention during writing as he needs the support and direction as he sounds out words. Overall, John is an enthusiastic learner who cares about other people. His strengths must be highlighted in order for his success, and I cannot wait to see how he grows as a kindergartener next year.

Focus Student 2: Adrian Hernandez

Adrian's success this year has stemmed from his own ability to recognize his strengths

and weaknesses. An intelligent individual, Adrian is performing at grade or above grade level in many disciplines. He is performing above grade level in math, reading, and writing, and has finally discovered his importance as a learner. He knows that he is strong in math, and when he maintains focused and interested in the specific grade level topics, he thrives as a student. More often than not though, Adrian worries about other people in the room, and becomes easily distracted by what they are doing. This peer distraction as well as personal distraction has hindered his learning in whole group discussion, and influenced his ability to follow instructions. Although these academic setbacks with regards to distraction have influenced his ability to maintain focus, Adrian is still a devoted student who continuously shows growth in all academic areas.

Social and emotional development.

Adrian has grown both socially and emotionally, yet still requires much guidance and support. During lessons, he is more engaged and willing to participate because he feels comfortable around his peers. However, Adrian still thrives off of the amusement of his friends and often looks for a laugh. He wants to be liked by everyone, and thus is continuously communicates with his peers whether the timing is appropriate or not. I believe his ability to be distracted impacts this peer distraction and need for belonging. Even more so than before, Adrian gets caught up in his own world of thoughts and repetitive motions. His occupational therapist and I have worked intensively on how to support Adrian and provide him with breaks throughout the day to enhance his success academically and socially.

Academic development: math, reading and writing.

Academically, Adrian is a strong student. He is performing above grade level in reading, writing, and math. With regards to reading though, Adrian's reading scores are not indicative of his overall academic success. He only grew by one point on his math MAP assessment and is

now at the 18th percentile. I would like to attribute this to my lack of monitoring paired with his ease of distraction. These scores though do not reflect his in class mathematical abilities.

Mathematically, Adrian excels as he understands algebraic and number operations as well as word problems, geometry and number sense. He can easily solve math problems with numbers within 10 (See Figure B5, Appendix B). Mathematically he is performing above the 50th percentile on his math MAP assessments. Based on academic quizzes and assessments, Adrian is performing above grade level and understand basic mathematical principals and concepts.

Adrian is reading at a level D, and has shown his growth in understanding more tricky concepts such as vowel teams, silent E and digraphs. He has struggled to communicate his ideas about a text by using language such as “I don’t know”. Now however, he uses evidence from the text to support his own ideas and opinions about what he has learned. I am very excited to see Adrian’s growth as a reader, especially since communicating with his prior TK teacher, and discovering her hesitations with his growth.

I have seen a dramatic increase in Adrian’s writing abilities this year. As he is easily distracted, I always have him sit at my kidney table during writing. Although he often asks how to spell words, when I immediately respond by telling him to sound out each word, he has no trouble writing down the sounds each word makes. Adrian is able to expand on his ideas as a writer and correctly respond to each writing prompt through pictures and sentences. One area of growth is his knowledge of punctuation. As seen in Figure B6, Appendix B, Adrian’s writing is strong, but he uses punctuation at the end of every line, instead of every sentence. I must focus on this in my upcoming writing lessons to eliminate this misconception.

Adrian’s greatest pitfall academically is his lack of focus and distraction during lessons. Without proper guidance and direct reminders, Adrian struggles to complete many tasks. Because of this, I have been pulling him for small group instruction at my kidney table to stay

focused. I would recommend that his future teacher, provide him opportunities to succeed in the least overstimulating environments as possible.

Funds of knowledge and challenges.

I utilize Adrian's funds of knowledge often in class as he is a returning TK. Adrian's excitement grows as he recognizes material from last year, and feels confident in answering questions. During whole group discussion, I use his knowledge and excitement about material to engage other students in the lesson. I often draw upon Adrian's funds of knowledge to help other students succeed in our class.

During our home interview, Adrian's mother did not disclose his susceptibility to illness. He has missed the occasional days of school due to his sicknesses, and this has been a challenge outside of my control. His uncontrollable actions are also outside of my control. I often ask him if he can control his rapid hand movements or physical and social awareness around other people, and he replies that he cannot. I think this is more of an internal force within him, and I need to nurture and support this uncontrollable action while also reminding him of his own goals within the classroom.

Action plan progress.

Adrian's academic plan was successful with regard to academics. He has become a fluent reader and knows up to 50 sight words. He has begun to communicate more in class and use complete sentences when answering questions as this is one of his IEP goals for the end of the year. I have provided Adrian the space to practice his reading skills during guided reading every day, and I have seen a drastic increase in not only his fluency, but also his comprehension. He now answers questions in full sentences, and is willing to make mistakes when reading.

I have noticed Adrian's academic success as I give more explicit and direct instructions. Evertson, Emmer, & Watson (2012) posit that providing brief, clear instructions to scholars with

special needs helps them thrive as students (p. 226). Adrian has proved to thrive with this structure and these kinds of explicit instructions. I would like to provide more structure in my social emotional support throughout the day.

I think many of my strategies used on Adrian have been very successful. I have addressed, yet not drawn attention to his repetitive vocalizations and repetitive hand motions. I calmly redirect him, and regain his focus during daily activities. I think that I could provide more opportunities for role play to practice positive social behaviors. Our schedule does not lend itself to much variability, but for the success of my students, I think it is mandatory, and something I must incorporate this last trimester of the year.

Revised action plan.

Adrian's action plan is simple and straight forward. He must have priority seating on the rug and at his table. Adrian needs clear and direct instructions in order to succeed. For this to occur, one may need to vocalize these expectations multiple times and have him repeat them back to you. I would recommend a peer buddy who is bright, yet focused in their academic studies to help keep Adrian on task. I would also provide many movement breaks for Adrian. He is larger in stature, needs to move often, and struggles to fit in the desired rug square spaces. In light of this I would provide alternative seating for him, and allow him many breaks where he utilizes a fidget spinner or adapted form of technology.

Focus Student 3: Daniela Molina

A shy young girl at the start of the year, Daniela has slowly come out of her shell academically, emotionally and socially. Although she is still a timid girl, she has made a group of friends that make her feel comfortable and confident in our classroom. She eagerly participates in class discussions, and although soft spoken, knows the answers to many questions asked in class. Her greatest growth though has been in ownership of her work. Daniela struggled

to write words on a page and rarely completed her homework. Now, she refuses the help of her mother and writes complete sentences describing the book she read for homework. Her confidence in her own abilities has helped her succeed overall as an individual in our classroom, and I am so proud of her personal growth.

Social and emotional development.

Approaching the door with a grin, I know that Daniela is exuberant to share her homework. Originally walking in to class with tears welling up in her eyes, she is a changed young girl. After greeting her at the door, I barely have time to move out of her way as she bounds past me to find her seat and converse with friends. She gets started on work right away, and it is evident that she feels more safe and comfortable in our classroom.

One of my action steps was to assign her a peer buddy, and her peer buddy is her partner on the rug. Lilian¹¹ is an outgoing, bright, and approachable young girl who frequently participates in class. Although she herself can be easily distracted, I knew she would welcome Daniela with open arms, and help her grow not only socially but also emotionally. With a peer mentor, Daniela approaches other students in class to ask them to play, and now comforts those that need additional love. Emotionally, she does not cry as much during class because she has people that she now trusts.

Academic development.

Math.

At the beginning of the year, Daniela placed in the 8th percentile on her MAP standardize assessment and was performing below grade level in math receiving a one out of four on her report card. I foolishly believed that math was her weakest subject because as the months have

¹¹ Pseudonym for real child's name

progressed she has proven me wrong. On her midyear MAP assessment, she reached her math goal, and her RIT grew by 24 points. She was however still in the 29th percentile. This improvement in four months, gave me tremendous hope in her abilities and success in math.

On her first interim math assessment taken in December, Daniela scored below grade level. Her strength is geometry, but numbers and operations seemed to be challenging for her. After winter break however, something clicked, and she was able to recognize her numbers, count objects and understand the difference of one greater and less than. Her quiz scores significantly increased as she started working more at grade level than below. Her most recent interim assessment is indicative of her growth as her score was approaching proficiency in mathematics. Reviewing her overall score in math, she is receiving a three out four this trimester, which means she is working at grade level. She still has much hard work ahead of her, but her growth needs to be celebrated, and I cannot wait to see her performance on the Spring MAP assessment.

Reading.

Daniela's knowledge of letters and sound recognition has greatly improved; however, she is still working below grade level with regards to reading. She knows 20 upper and lowercase letters and 24 sounds. At this point in the year, students should be reading at a level C, and Daniela is currently reading at a level A. This does not reflect her focus however during reading groups. She always comes excited to learn, and is quick to pick up the pattern in a story. One of her strengths is being able to look at a picture and identify the correct word. Although not able to read every word, her comprehension of a story is one of her strengths. Her ability to blend words has grown, and she is able to blend certain CVC words with pictorial support, but without the pictures, she still struggles to blend sounds together to read words.

One of Daniela's greatest areas of struggle is recognizing sight words. Although she can pick up a pattern when reading, she still forgets these sights words quickly after the book has been

completed. Her mom has mentioned to me that her own work has gotten in the way of helping Daniela with her reading at home, and so I want to provide more supports for her in the classroom. This month, Daniela will be placed in a remedial reading group to hopefully enhance her skills as a reader. On top of this new reading group, she will receive RTI during the day to practice, blending, sight words, and reading fluently.

Writing.

Within this last month, Daniela has finally discovered her strength in writing, and she can finally write her entire name. During our writing, she usually would not write anything without the support and prompting from me. Now however, she immediately sits down at my kidney table and begins to form her story in her head. Once she knows what she is writing about, she sounds out her letters to write words. Although these words are by no means written correctly or coherently (See Figure C5, Appendix, C), she has reached a huge point in her academic career where she believes in her own ability as a writer, and knows that she is capable of success.

Funds of knowledge and challenges.

I have tried to incorporate Daniela's assets and funds of knowledge during our lessons and small guided reading groups. During guided reading, I choose books that I believe are of interest to her, and often throughout lessons, I hear her exclaim, "that's like my mom!" or "I do that with my brother!" Emphasizing her intelligence and encouraging her that she is smart and capable of learning has given her the push to believe in herself as a student. She values education, but didn't know how or why. I believe that now she has learned the significance of learning, and I have seen her excitement grow about as she sees progress in her own studies.

Daniela lives in a household with six other individuals, shares a bed with her mother, and thus impacting her hours of sleep, which has greatly influenced her success in the classroom. This lack of sleep has proven to be a challenge to her and something that is outside of my

control. At least once a week, she falls asleep either at her desk or on the rug. Studies have shown that a lack of sleep can be detrimental to one's ability to retain information. This lack of sleep has greatly impacted her success as a student this year, as she often complains that she is exhausted or did not sleep.

Action plan progress.

Daniela's growth has been tremendous from where she started on the first day of school. She still is working below grade level in reading and writing, however, looking at where she started at the beginning of the year to now, gives me hope that she will only continue to advance as a successful student. Her support remains strong at home as I continue to send home educational resources, and her desire to learn and grow will help her during the rest of this school year.

One strategy that was the most successful for Daniela was pulling her for small group and individual remedial instruction. Daniela receives small group intervention during math, writing, and reading. At the end of the day, she also receives one-on-one intervention during RTI. Not once has she complained about working during choice time, and her eagerness to learn and resiliency pushes her to become a better student. In the beginning of the year, she relied heavily on me and I needed to prompt her to get her to do work. Now however, she only uses me as a guide, and occasionally asks me questions about how to spell a word or complete an activity. With my praise and encouragement, Daniela has started to gain focus and become serious when completing her work.

I think that one strategy that has been least successful has been constant repetition without context. As I pulled Daniela for one on one intervention, I would have her practice air writing a certain letter, write it, build it, and then watch a video about it. I would then introduce another letter, and once completing the same activities with that letter, I would return to the previous letter. She was unable to remember the letter we had just worked on. As I practiced this letter in

my reading groups, and emphasized the importance of knowing all of our letters in order to sound out words and be successful readers, Daniela started learning more and more. Without context, constant repetition does not help Daniela learn. This is also one thing that I would tell her teachers next year as they introduce new concepts and information.

Revised action steps.

Daniela needs continual remedial intervention both this year and next year. I would still like for her to work at my kidney table during math, writing, and reading. She still struggles with blending, sight word recognition, and reading fluently. Because of this, she will be working in a smaller reading group specifically targeted to support her needs and areas for growth. She will also receive additional reading support from outside teachers during RTI intervention times throughout the day.

I believe that two other educational support will help Daniela grow. I would like to provide more opportunities for her to listen to stories through audio recordings as she follows along to the words in an actual book. I think this will help her recognize words and further develop her phonological awareness skills. Printing visuals for her to look at on her desk will also help her grow as a learner. She sometimes gets easily distracted, and thus looks around the room. If there are visual reminders and academic supports on her desk, my hope is that she will look at these and remain focused on her work.

Next school year.

When I think about an equitable education for all students, I think about a classroom free of judgment or predispositions on the first day where teachers and students build each other's trust through openness and connection. What advice or information would I give to their teachers for the next school year? I find this question hard to answer because I want to allow each one of these students' success without any baggage that may have accumulated with me throughout the

year. I do however wonder if by not sharing this information, am I being an inequitable teacher? These students have already faced setbacks due to illness, poverty, parental education, English as a second language, and being people of color, and it is my job to help their next teachers succeed and grow.

As thus, I would explain that Daniela is a shy young girl who is devoted to her family and loves her mother very much. She may be disengaged with her head down on the rug, but this is because she is either too exhausted from the lack of sleep or feigns interest when she does not understand the material or how to complete assignment. Partnering her up with an outgoing yet focused scholar will help her come out of her shell and gain the confidence just as she has this year. She is a dedicated learner who cares tremendously about her success in school, but may not always have the right set of tools to find it. Praise boosts her confidence, and within the last two weeks, I have seen a transformed student that although has entered the game late, is motivated and devoted to succeed.

John is a sweet, talkative and bright young boy, who values his connections with others. He is a visual learner and loves videos and songs when learning new content. He is a fast learner who loves math and reading. Challenge him to take time to value his work across all disciplines. He is susceptible to illness, so make sure to support him and his family through any hardships that may arise. Make sure that he is seated next to focused individuals.

Similarly, Adrian is a bright young boy who is not even aware of his own strengths. He will not only distract himself, but distract you and others in the process. However, the repetitive uncontrollable hand movements are something that even he does not recognize he is doing. A gentle and calm reminder that doesn't disrupt the lesson will help keep him on track. He remains the most focused when working on projects that interest him, and you must give him constant reminders to keep him on task. He is very smart, and challenge him to explain his thinking in

order to help him grow as an individual.

Each one of my focus students has grown this semester not only as a student, but also as a member of our community. With care, support, and challenge, they have developed their own sense of self. I cannot wait to see where they will be academically, socially, and emotionally next year as they continue to grow at Magnolia.

The Developing Professional Perspective

My First Year of Teaching

In the next few sections, I describe in depth my experience and knowledge gained as a teacher. My first year of teaching has been the most challenging yet rewarding experience of my life. My beliefs about social justice have only further fueled my practice as an educator. I have become a more conscientious teacher to data, assessments, and have paid more attention to detail and understanding the curriculum. Pedagogical and emotional attunement have been integrated and practiced in my classroom. I value each and every one of my students, and their success is my success while their setbacks are my challenges. Naturally a reflective person, CGU and Magnolia's self-reflective philosophies and pedagogies have helped me grow and understand my purpose as a teacher. From the talented and inspirational Maya Angelou who said, "People will forget what you said, will forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel." My students have learned a vast amount of knowledge this semester, but in 12 years, they may not remember this. They will however, remember how they felt in Whitman College.

Successes and challenges.

Butterflies swarmed in my stomach on my first day of school. What if I am not qualified? Am I equipped to manage and teach up to 30 tiny humans? Can I handle my responsibilities at Magnolia while being a full time graduate student and conducting ethnographic research? Looking upon the faces of my scholars as they entered the classroom, many of my worries faded

as I recognized these same butterflies were echoed throughout my own scholars' facial expressions as they wearily crept into the classroom with apprehension, tears, and giddiness. Immediately I recognized that we were in this together. We were all hesitant, apprehensive, and scared, and sometimes this fear, especially a unified fear of the unknown, can bond and unite people so they can rise to any challenge together. This has been exactly true this year, and I never would have imagined the immense impact my scholars have on me as an educator, but what was unexpected was the impact that my school, the community, the parents, the children, and my colleagues could have on my development as a first-year teacher.

A challenge is something new and difficult which requires great effort and determination. My year consisted of challenges daily, but without these challenges, I would not have been able to be so successful. Many of my successes are my challenges, and I would not have grown so exponentially this year as a thoughtful and inquisitive teacher without these successes and challenges being intertwined.

One of my successes that did not stem from a challenge was connecting with my students. Always connecting to children with ease, I found this year to be no different. I see children and my students as individual people with their own set of beliefs, and I value their input and listen to them with no judgment. My students quickly grew to trust and appreciate me as their teacher because I set time aside to get to know each of them and their families on an individual level, and showed my vulnerability while opening up about my own personal life. With these strong bonds and connections, I designed an open, honest, and positive learning environment, where all of my students felt safe to succeed, be vulnerable, value one another, and take risks both academically and socially. As they grew comfortable with me, my students began to appreciate learning and our love for academics developed as a class.

With a very structured and set curriculum, I found behavioral management even more challenging due to the stress of accomplishing the rigid lessons set forth by Magnolia. Two scholars in particular provided many challenges behaviorally up until the middle of the school year. They talked back, did not want to be in school, harmed other children, and did not understand how to express their own feelings. With these two problematic behaviors occurring throughout the day, I found myself needing to skip lessons in order to support and calm these struggling students as they launched pencils at their peers and physically harmed them. I did not receive enough support from the administration, but being an independent person, I fortunately took matters into my own hands. I prioritized the emotional safety of these students and took time and effort to make connections with them and their families. With their familial support, these two individuals have grown into independent kindergarteners. My year would not have been the same without these two amazing children, and although challenging, their growth in six months makes me feel successful as a teacher.

As these severe behavioral issues unfolded during class, I found myself relieved when those students would sit calmly at their desk and draw or play with trains in our play area. Although our class engaged in many class discussions about behavior and how to support those that were showing unacceptable behavior, I quickly realized that my actions or lack thereof were setting the precedent in my class that it was okay to not pay attention. I had lowered my expectations for these scholars too much, and I recognized right away that I needed to raise my expectations in order to succeed. I helped them recognize when they needed to take a break, and how they should articulate their feelings when they were upset. My strength of holding my students accountable for their actions and setting high expectations has derived from the challenges I have faced this year in my classroom. Holding my students to high expectations is challenging, but ultimately, their success depends on how I push and challenge them to be their best selves. As I

embarked on my first year of being a lead teacher, I felt confident in my abilities, yet hesitant in my lack of experience teaching younger students. Most of my teaching experience was cultivated in private schools where I taught predominately white, affluent children. When I made the conscious decision to depart from the independent school sector and step into the unknown of public and charter schools, I grew more and more confident with my choice as I flourished at Claremont Graduate University. Ready for this career switch, my journey has not been easy nor do I fully understand my place in the education world. But the one thing I have come to understand is my own strengths, teaching styles, and philosophies, and I vow to never waver on my strong beliefs in developing the whole child, academically, socially, and emotionally, to engage them in creativity, rigorous, higher order thinking, and set high expectations, in order to foster a lifelong love and passion for learning.

One of my greatest challenges this year has been the structure, rules and set curriculum at Magnolia. For four, five and six year olds, learning is done at its best through structure and exploration (Wood, 1994, pg. 41). When, “children are getting the opportunity to play and learn in ways that respond to their levels of growth,” (pg. 41) children are able to learn about the world around them. Although structure is deeply integrated into the Magnolia curriculum and values, exploration and play are not emphasized. Working as a camp counselor allowed me to see the direct benefits of play and how that teaches creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, peer interaction and conflict resolution. The structure at this school does not allow students to develop their own thoughts and beliefs. Instead, children are rule followers who struggle to form their own ideas. In my classroom, I have combatted this structure by making connections across disciplines and applying it to their lives. I provide time and space for children to work in groups and brainstorm ideas together.

Although confined to the structure of Magnolia, I have found ways to help my scholars see the value and fun in learning as we engage in more hands-on activities as opposed to the lesson planned worksheets. This has become evident in my scholar's love for reading. Integrating reading into all parts of the day across subjects has been one of my greatest successes. I read my favorite childhood books, and express my own interest and love for reading. As students enter my reading groups each morning, at least one proclaims, "I love reading!" This excitement fuels all of my students to love reading and growing as readers.

Personal beliefs.

My beliefs about student to teacher ratio have been challenged this year. I have always recognized the importance of one to one direct support, and working at a private school allowed me to see the benefits of small class sizes. As looked out at my class of 25 scholars, I realized how much they have grown from each other. It is my job as the teacher to provide small group, and one on one support and intervention. Without this, not all of my students would have been as successful this year. Without my large class size though, my students would not have grown into the supportive, eager, and confident learners they are today. The once soft spoken, painfully shy individual emphatically raises their hand to come stand in front of the classroom and count to 100. When one student passes their reading level, it is as if all students have passed their reading level as they run from their seats to give high fives or hugs and show their enthusiasm. Class size is only what you make of it, and more students allows for more opportunities.

Working at a school with intense structure and set curriculum, my beliefs about how students learn has not changed from when I first began my year in grad school and teaching. I still strongly believe that children succeed through play and project based learning. Not all students learn the same, and a structured curriculum does not allow for the growth and development of different learning styles.

It is not only important to teach lessons to tap into students' visual, verbal, kinesthetic, and tactile learning, but it is vital to help them discover their different strengths of intelligences. Howard Gardner says that schools focus too much on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence. He continues to postulate that educators must place equal attention on individuals who show gifts in other intelligences such as spatial, kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic (American Institute for Learning and Human Development, 2019). I have learned this year that younger students learn more through kinesthetic, visual, and hands on activities, and I would like to continue to push myself as a teacher and tap into their different multiple intelligences.

TPE.

Based on the TPE clinical evaluations my greatest strengths are my ability to engage and support all students in learning and developing as a professional. Since I have started working with children, my ability to connect with them has always been a strength. I can sense what they need and want, or help give them the tools and space to articulate their emotions and needs. Teaching has been no different. I set high expectations for my students because I know they are capable. Getting to know my students has helped me understand how to support and engage them. I foster a sense of community in my classroom while pushing students to think on their own. I also demand respect in my classroom, and this has allowed students to value one another based on their strengths and support each other up during group work or through productive struggle. As a developing educator, I am constantly reflecting on my teaching and wanting to improve my own practice. I crave constructive feedback, and go out of my way to seek advice, ask questions, or research new techniques that will improve my own teaching craft. The more I know, the more my students will have the opportunity to grow and succeed.

My strengths in engaging and supporting all students and developing as professional will always be growing, but understanding and organizing subject matter for student learning, planning instruction and designing learning experiences for all students, and assessing student learning are higher priority areas of professional growth. My creation of visual aids to support student acquisition of knowledge has improved over the course of this year. I would like to continue thinking about how I can give students more access to all content while making connection across the many disciplines of math, literacy, social studies, writing and science. Now grasping the importance of organizing subject matter in a way that connects with all students, I am excited to continue to find new ways to make subject matter accessible for all students.

Magnolia's set curriculum has limited my own ability to plan instruction in a way that I find inclusive and developmentally appropriate and rigorous for all students. With these setbacks this year, my growth has stemmed from the support of Rebecca, my faculty advisor, as she has encouraged me and opened my eyes to the how and why I make content meaningful and deliver the context of what matters to me and my students. I need to continuously be thinking about my students to personally inform instruction, make the content more relevant and sticky, and tap into my students' expertise. Furthermore, assessing student learning is another area for professional growth. Data has never been as much of a priority for me, but this year, I have recognized its importance and value in order to guide instruction and intervention. I need to keep gathering and using data collecting in the moment to inform my instruction and recognize areas for intervention. I also need to continue to use assessment data to guide my instruction and next steps in order to help my scholars develop. A lot of teaching is about experience in the classroom, and the more time, I spend perfecting and editing my own craft, the more I will grow as an educator.

As I move forward with my teaching career, I have three goals that I challenge myself to reach. First, I would like to continue to develop my skills on assessing students. At Magnolia, many of the assessments and quizzes were not age appropriate, and I did not feel as if they showcased my students' knowledge and talent. Alternatively, their structured testing environment allowed me to recognize the importance of assessing students frequently and often to know exactly how and where I can help them succeed. Professional development days centered around aggressive monitoring and analyzing testing data has help me develop my own skills as a teacher. Still needing much room for growth on documenting my checking for understanding, I have learned the importance of aggressive monitoring, and I want to challenge myself to continue to improve on this throughout the year and years to come.

Additionally, I would like to become an expert on the curriculum across grade levels. Knowing the sequence of events and knowledge learned throughout each grade level will help me better prepare my own students and set them up for success in the future. Lastly, I want to challenge myself to step outside of my comfort zone and teach another grade level other than kindergarten. Always been self-conscious of my own intellectual abilities, I second guess whether or not I am even smart enough to teach the content at a higher grade. With the knowledge and confidence that I have gained from both Claremont Graduate University as well as Magnolia, I challenge myself to step outside of my own comfort zone and believe in my own capabilities.

The growth in my students' overall academic progress and achievement this year has given me confidence in my own abilities as a teacher. My effectiveness has been rooted in my ability to connect and utilize my students' assets and interest to increase engagement and excitement about learning as well as my thorough lesson preparation that taps into students' strengths. Overall, I have gained a level of trust with my students that allows me to push them without judgment of

failure. I often emphasize that failure only makes us more knowledgeable and smarter, and this has shown as students are willing to make mistakes and take risks. My students know that I will not give them the answer, and instead must rely on their own skills learned or ask a friend for assistance. With a fractured curriculum like Magnolia's, I have consciously made an effort to connect each lesson to intersect and make sense in a larger scheme of the world. I want to make my students' learning tangible and applicable to their everyday life, and their academic progress has reveal that these techniques that I used amongst my students has been successful in their growth as kindergarteners this year.

Influential readings and speakers.

The most influential book I read during my time at CGU was *The Power of Moments* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath (2017). This story transformed my own way of thinking as I learned about how defining moments shape our lives. We create our own defining moments, and as teachers we create defining moments for our students in our class. Reading about a scenario where parent- teacher relations had become so strained, that the principal required teachers to visit parents' homes. The parent-teacher visits at Stanton Elementary only lasted about an hour, but they were extremely powerful and instrumental in turning their school around. Prior to these visits, there was a history of mistrust between parents and the teachers. Many of the parents at the school "thought the teachers were indifferent and ineffective, and didn't actually care about their child" (Chip & Chip, 2017, p. 228). While the teachers at the school, "felt the parents didn't seem to value education." (Chip & Chip, 2017, p. 228) Parents and teachers failed to communicate with one another, and thus, made assumptions about each other's attitudes towards the children's' education. Parents at Stanton Elementary school had not felt heard by their child's teachers. Parents want to feel heard and included in their child's educational process. When they

feel as if they do not have a say, or that the teacher does not care about them or their child, they will not be willing to invest their own time.

So, when the teachers came to the parents' homes, they showed interest in their students, and more importantly they showed interest in the parents. The teachers sole purpose was to ask questions and listen to the parents. Never before has parents been asked about their hopes and dreams for their child. The parents finally felt as if their voices were being valued and heard. This small gesture deepened the ties between parents and teachers. As their relationship strengthened over time, teachers built a level of familiarity and trust with the parents. By investing a short period of time to individually sit down with and get to know each family, the teachers drastically changed the dynamic of the parent-teacher relationship. I recognized this same appreciation and deepened level of trust when I visited my own students' homes and spoke to their families. Each parent was shocked and honored to have me in their home, and they recognized that I wanted their child to succeed. This trust opened up a whole new line of communication and commitment to one another.

Claudia Bermudez's workshop lessons on social justice have also been very instrumental in my success as an educator. As quoted from her workshop on June 27, 2018, she showed us the quote, "Respecting other people's culture is a part of civic responsibility." (Certificate lecture at CGU, June, 27, 2018). After my time working at a Title I school, I would like to add that along with respect, people must understand, appreciate, and value other people's culture as part of our civic responsibility. Respect has greatly influenced my teaching philosophy, and is something that I emphasize daily in my classroom. As we respect one another, we let others know that their voice matters regardless of their culture or the color of their skin. Instead what matters are their own unique and life experiences.

Lucy Calkins' *The Art of Teaching Writing* (1994) has greatly influenced my work as a teacher and my teaching philosophies. Never a strong writer myself, I dreaded writing assignments. As Calkins explains that all students are writers and have stories to tell, "When we help children know that their lives do matter, we are teaching writing." (pg. 16) It is our job as teachers to give students a platform to show that their lives are worth talking about. With our set curriculum, our students do not have the opportunity to write about their own interests. This past month, I have created blank books for each student to create their own stories and read them aloud to the class. The sparked interest in my students' longing to create and write has increased dramatically. When we provide choice during writing assignments, we allow students to use their own life stories to grow not only as writers, but as confident people and storytellers.

Effective teaching.

Teaching is no easy job. The demands are high, and work-life balance is always compromised. I have witnessed teachers put forth every ounce of effort from their body, but still not get the recognition or support that they need and deserve from administration and parents. Does this make them an ineffective teacher? Absolutely not. An effective teacher needs the support from administration as well as parents to be the most impactful and successful as necessary. Without these supports, the teacher must learn on their own to recognize their own strengths and areas of growth and reflect on his or her own teaching style as well as what his or her students need.

In my first year of teaching, I am lucky enough to have supportive advisors and mentors who deeply care about my success as an educator. Because of their support, I have been able to grow and understand that there is not just one thing that makes a teacher effective, yet rather a collection of skills and practices. In my opinion, there are four critical aspects one needs to understand, practice, and believe in order to be successful: connection, knowledge and planning,

growth mindset, and social justice. In light of this, I would like to go a little more in depth into each of the four categories that intersect to make an effective teacher.

Connection.

Becoming a successful teacher requires care and dedication to one's students and their families. In order to be an effective teacher, one must get to know their students and access and capitalize on their funds of knowledge. As students become more vulnerable, the teacher must as well and divulge information about his or her own life. This relationship building and connection creates a sense of trust between the teacher, students and parents, and creates an environment where students feel emotionally safe. Once students are emotionally safe, then they will be more willing and ready to take risks and embrace academic challenges. Teachers in turn will better grasp students' personal and academic strength, areas of weakness and learning styles.

Knowledge and planning.

Knowing my scholars will help me with the second key piece of being an effective teacher: planning and preparation. To be an effective teacher, one must plan for lessons in advance and recognize common misconceptions and also here and how to increase the rigor or provide scaffolds. If I am not prepared to teach a lesson that keeps scholars engaged while also differentiates for them, then I am doing a disservice to my kids. When I know the text and material that I am teaching, then I can free myself to think about engagement. By knowing the curriculum and preparing for each lesson, the teacher can focus on how to make the lesson as engaging as possible for their scholars. To me, engaged scholars learn more and will retain the information that they learn. Increasing the rigor and providing challenging, yet accessible curriculum is crucial to all students. In order to create an equitable classroom, all students should have access to challenging curriculum that will stretch their minds and help them grow as learners and people. My goals are to also facilitate learning and growth as social and emotional

beings. I want my students to be problem solvers, learn conflict resolution skills, and access to their own emotions and feelings. This can only be done through thoughtful planning and preparation.

If one does not know his or her students, then they will not be able to best engage them and provide supports for them during each lesson. Not only is content knowledge and lesson preparation important, but one must know how to prep and analyze student data in order to be an effective teacher. Prepping for a lesson by looking at student work will guide and modify instruction. Recently, I was down about my students' standardized test scores because they weren't as high as I would like for them to be. As an effective teacher, I now need to think about what I can do with this data. I need to remember that all of my students have learned something this year. Now that I have accurate and precise data on their strengths and areas for growth, I can use this data as a tool to guide my instruction for the rest of the year. Academically my students started off a lot lower than their peers. In light of the recent data, I need to celebrate their growth as academic learners, but also as individuals.

Reflection.

Without reflection, one cannot truly unravel their strengths and areas for growth. Someone who is reflective and always trying to improve their own teaching. Not only have I discovered more about myself as a teacher through reflection, but I have learned more about the intricacies of my scholars as students and developing tiny humans. Reflection about my work allows me to step out of the classroom for a moment and gain a new perspective on teaching. Some days, I feel extremely effective and can see the growth and excitement in my scholars' eyes. Other days I feel very ineffective because I am caught up in the intensity of a specific child's struggles (usually behaviorally), and I let this consume me 100%. Although each child is extremely important, I think it is also important to think about my class collectively and what they need to

grow and succeed. I typically focus more on the individual than the group, but my reflection this year has allowed me to see that the individual and class are intertwined to create a cohesive unit. Without the emphasis of each other, one would not grow and develop to their fullest abilities.

Sometimes I forget that my students will not have the exposure to certain information because of their demographics (city, parental education level). This by no means lessens their intelligence or their parents', but it does mean that I need to remember to provide them with and expose them to as many as concrete and abstract details about the world around them. This directly relates to social justice because it is my job as their teacher to teach them equitably and provide them with resources and information that will help them better navigate the world.

Social justice.

Without reflection, I would not have gained so much insight into creating an equitable classroom where all of my students can succeed. Social justice must be integrated in every public, charter, and independent classrooms across the world. While working at Magnolia and attending CGU, social justice has always been at the forefront of my mind. As Pollock explains in Schooltalk (2017), "Caring about and believing in young people is obviously fundamental to student success. Increasing opportunity to learn is core to equity effort in education. So is precise and regular attention to students' needs" (pg. 17). To be an effective teacher, one must always think about how they can support student growth and success both in and out of the classroom, prepare their students for the real world while setting high expectations and providing opportunities for students to become independent learners.

Within this past year, I have learned to never make assumptions about my students or their parents. Because I never grew up as a person of color or in a low-income household, I will never know the hardships and struggle they face on a daily basis. I must instead be their ally, and show them that they matter and are important contributors to their community. Embracing and

acknowledging my students for who they are has allowed me to forge connections with each student and their family. All my students struggle and succeed because of different factors, and it is my job to create an equitable classroom where all of my scholars can grow and be challenged.

My goal is that the skills I explicitly teach in the classroom can directly be applied to their personal lives outside of the classroom. Sometimes we discount children, and think that they are too young to understand, however, I believe teaching them life skills at a young age is imperative for their success as they grow and develop in adults. As they learn to regulate themselves during small partner and group work, this can directly translate into their home life. Many of my students play with their siblings at home, and complain about fighting with them. Instead of fighting back, they proudly exclaim that they have used the peace path (classroom conflict resolution), which has strengthened their ability to use their words and express feelings. If I can give them the tools in the classroom to work cooperatively with one another by managing their thoughts and feelings, then they could potentially be more successful when interacting with their siblings. It is my job as their teacher to teach them accountability and help them understand their own personal needs when learning.

Curriculum is also directly correlated to social justice. Even though our school advocates for social justice, I see it lacking with regards to the curriculum. This set curriculum does not provide support for all English Learners, nor does it allow students to collaborate and think critically in small groups. Although extremely rigorous, the curriculum is disjointed and does not allow students to make connections with their learning and the real world. The downfall of a structured curriculum is that it does not teach to the individual student based off their interests, skills, and prior knowledge. At the beginning of the year, I would solely teach to the curriculum and not the scholars and that wasn't fair to my scholars. If I want to be the best teacher and provide them with a great education, I needed to teach them in ways that they will remember the

content they learn. I have learned that my scholars, although low income, absolutely love to learn, and I need to tap into this power of theirs to help them grow.

Often, I find myself feeling frustrated with my scholars who struggle to pay attention and follow directions. Some get distracted very easily, while others find it difficult to sit still and control their bodies. As frustrating as this can be, I have realized, after taking a step back, that their behaviors are a result of their home life, whether that be lack of structure, lack of parental figure, or stressful living environments. My goal is to hold them accountable for these behaviors because I know that they are capable of achieving greatness, however, I also need to be cognizant that it may take some scholars a longer time to reach this goal, and I need to be there to support them, be patient, and teach them the skills to succeed.

Creating an equitable classroom requires one to hold students accountable while providing different supports for students based on their needs. High expectations are set in my class for all of my students because I know that they are capable of achieving greatness. Sometimes however I get lost in my expectations because I apply the same expectations for all scholars, and this is inequitable. An effective teacher will not lower or raise expectations for different scholars, but instead alter expectations based on their specific needs. Teaching equitably allows me to show students that they are not all at the same learning levels, but they are all equally important and smart. Some scholars in my class are capable of completing work on their own and with accuracy. If I do not provide scaffolds for the scholars that are not at a place in their learning where they can work independently, then I am setting them up for failure. I want to continue thinking about this as I move forward in my practice and work with each scholar academically and behaviorally.

To create an environment where my students can grow to the best of their abilities, I must reveal the significance of the content learned while also relating this content and lessons to their

lives and the world around them. My scholars tend to be much more engaged when the material they learn is connected to their life. I think that this relates to social justice because they may not have as many opportunities to explore different parts of the city due to their financial situations. It is my job to help them make sense of the world around them and prepare them for life in “the real world”. The more connections they make to their lives and the content we are learning, the more likely they will be interesting in learning.

As my scholars enter the world, they need to know how and why the information they have learned will help them thrive and grow as people. My job as a teacher is to not only teach my scholars how to be successful students, but more importantly to make sense and connections to the world around them. As children of color, they are already at a disadvantage as minorities in our society. They may experience some kind of discrimination during their lives. My hope is to foster resilient, inquisitive, passionate and kind people how use their knowledge to grow into lifelong learners and successful, contributing members of society. If they are able to use the knowledge that I instill in them to help them navigate their world as they grow up, then I have done my job as a teacher.

Conclusion

Teaching full-time and attending grad school has allowed me to see the importance of hard work. I worried that writing an ethnography would be cumbersome and time consuming, but the more time I spent with my students and their families, the once burden of this ethnographic narrative shifted, and instead brought me joy. Immersing myself in the low-income Pico-Union neighborhood enabled me to grow into the open-minded, supportive, and reflective teacher I am today. As a teacher, my student’s successes and failures are my own. When they stumble, I help them back up on their feet. When they succeed, I cheer about their successes from the rooftops, and my students’ hard work and resiliency inspires me to learn more effective teaching

strategies.

An effective teacher incorporates social justice into the classroom by setting high expectations for all students and by creating meaningful individual connections with students and their families. Each student has progressed at different speeds, but every individual has grown academically, socially, and emotionally. When I listen, my students' voices feel heard. I created a classroom environment where inclusion, respect, and trust is valued, and hope to build strong relationships every year with my new group of students.

Documenting my students' growth through this analytical study has shown me that all students are capable of learning. My teaching experience this year has helped me realize the importance of frequent data collection to know my students' strengths and areas for growth. Analyzing data is still a personal area of growth, and I plan to continue collect and analyze data to adjust my teaching strategies to best support all students' learning.

Teaching is a challenging and rewarding profession. As I journey into my second year, I enter the classroom more confident in my own abilities, and know that my own perspectives will continue to be challenged. Without these challenges, I cannot grow into an even more effective teacher. However, this year has helped me developed the necessary skills to build a roadmap for my own teaching path while educating and impacting young children and future citizens for years to come.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Directions:

Respond to the prompt what do you like to do?

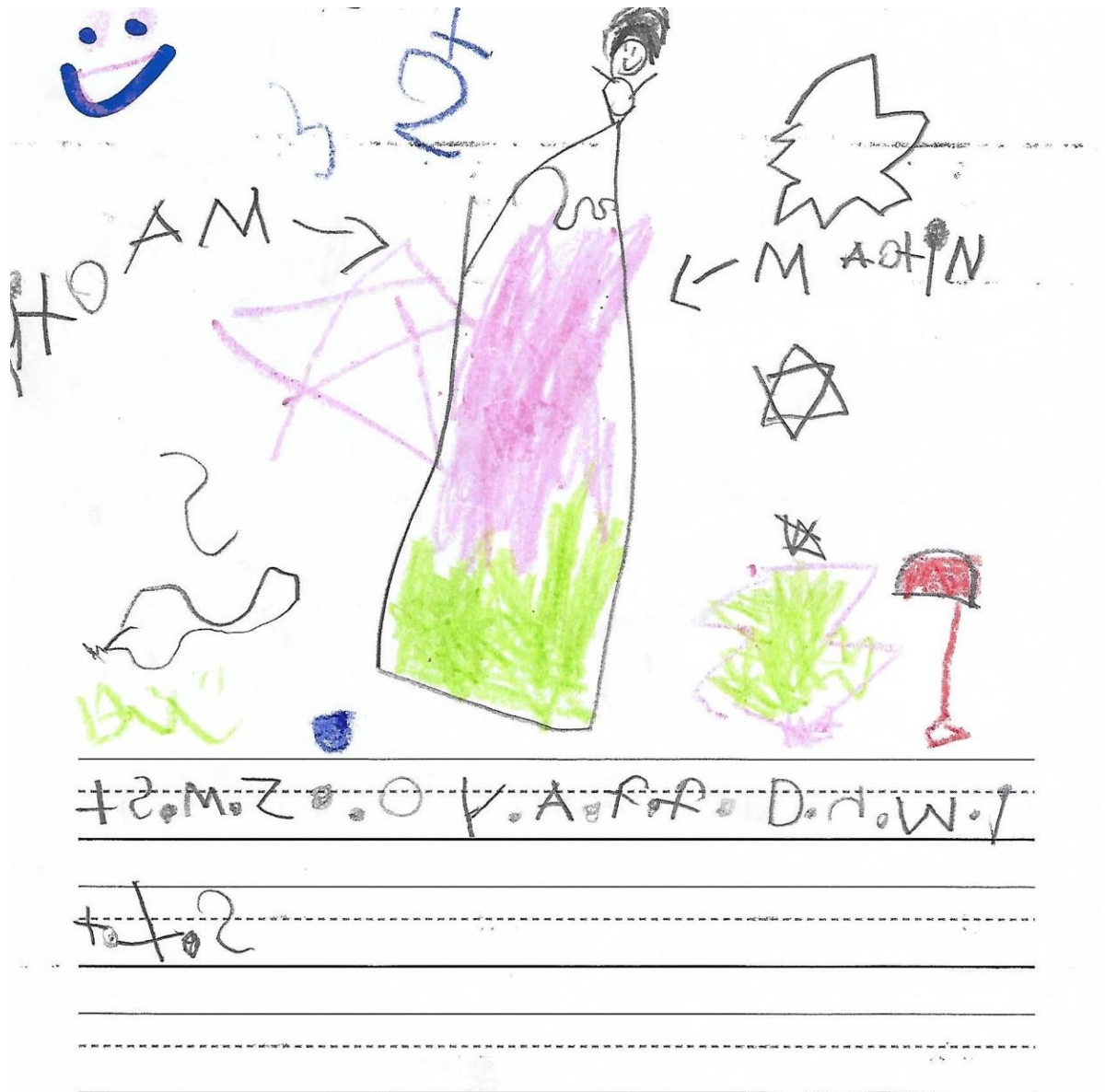




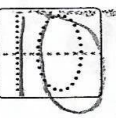


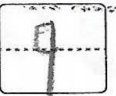


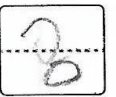


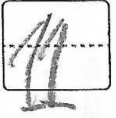
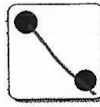
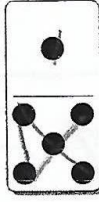
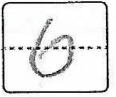


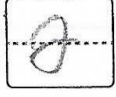





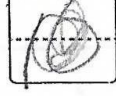


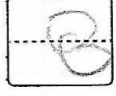

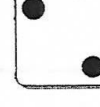
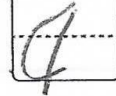
Figure A1. John enjoys drawing and responds to the prompt what do you like to do. He followed the directions of labeling his picture and writing a sentence. November 2018.

Directions:

Write and draw who you like to spend time with at school.



Figure A2. John responds to the prompt by drawing pictures of people he likes to spend time with. He attempts to write my name to show that he likes spending time with Ms. B. at school. September 2018

1	 +  = 	2	 +  = 
3	 +  = 	4	 +  = 
5	 +  = 	6	 +  = 
7	 +  = 	8	 +  = 
9	 +  = 	10	 +  = 
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> 12345678910 </div> <p>Look at the objects in each set, then add the objects and write the answer in the space provided.</p>			

Starfall
teach.starfall.com

Figure A3. John has some difficulty adding within 10, counting one to one and writing the correct number. October 2018.

LET'S count to 100 20!

Counting to 20

Directions: Help the meerkat count from 1-20. Write the numbers in the boxes.

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20

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PAGE 1

Figure A4. John correctly writes his numbers from 1 to 20. November 2018.

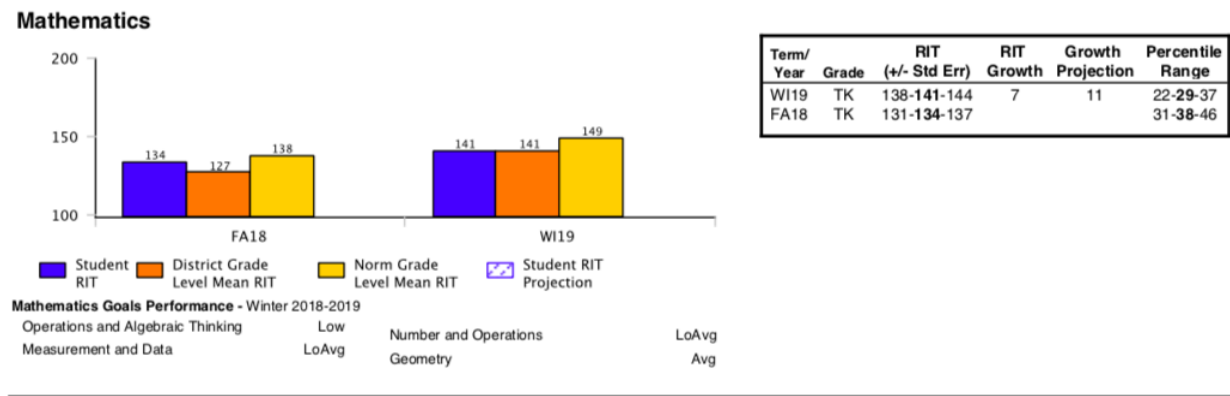


Figure A5. John’s winter math MAP assessment data.

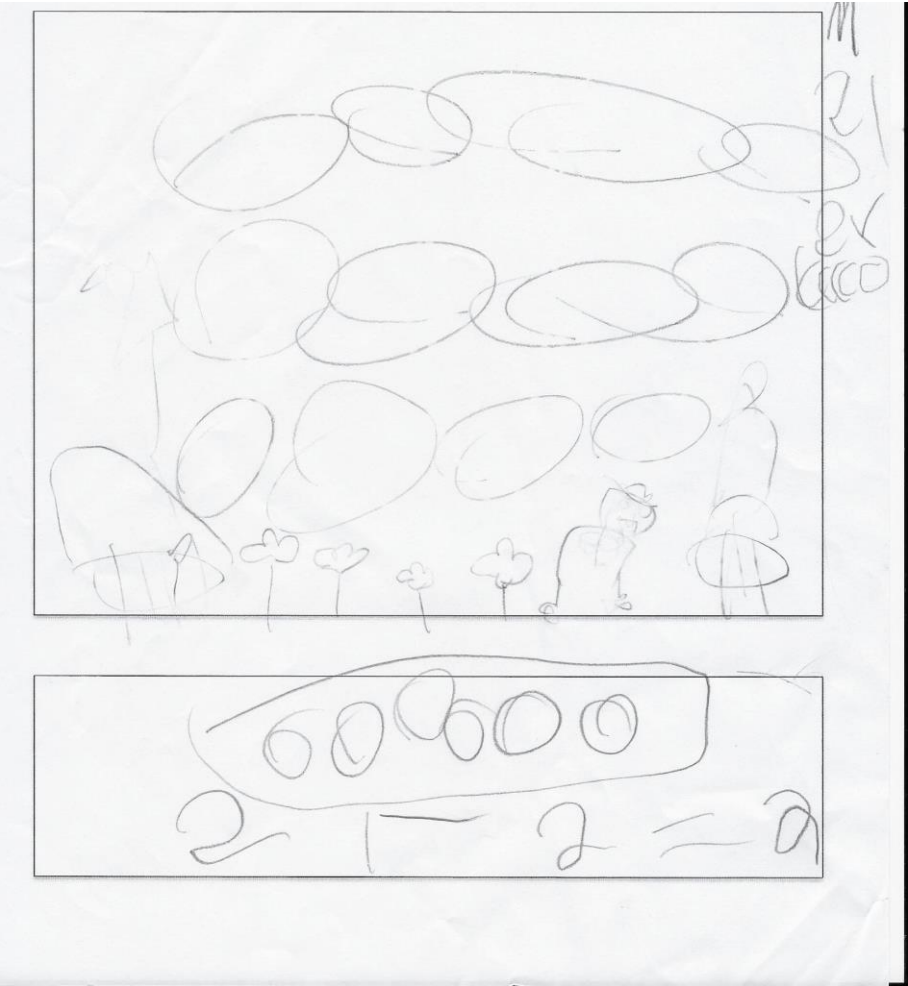


Figure A6. John’s attempt to solve the math problem: There were 12 pieces of gold in a pot. Ms. B. took out 6 pieces of gold. How many pieces of gold are left in the pot? March 2019.


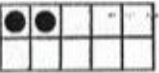
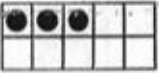
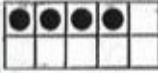
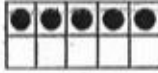
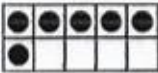


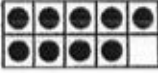
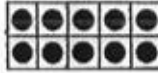
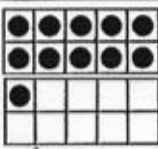
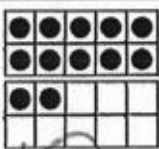
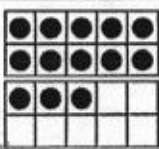
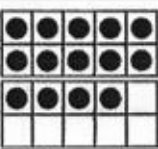
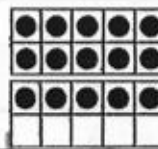
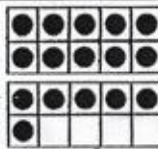
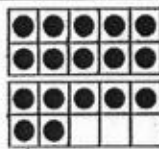
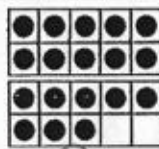
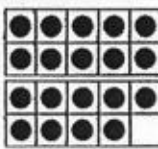
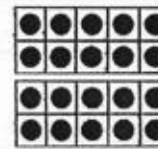


Figure A7. John's writing sample and response to the prompt think of a time when you lost something. February 2019.

Appendix B

Ten Frames: Count to 20!

Directions: Use the ten frames to help you count from 1-20.
Write the number on the lines.

				
1	2	3	4	5
				
6	7	8	9	10
				
11	12	13	14	15
				
16	17	18	19	20

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Figure B1: Adrian uses tens frames and objects to count and represent those objects. October, 2018.

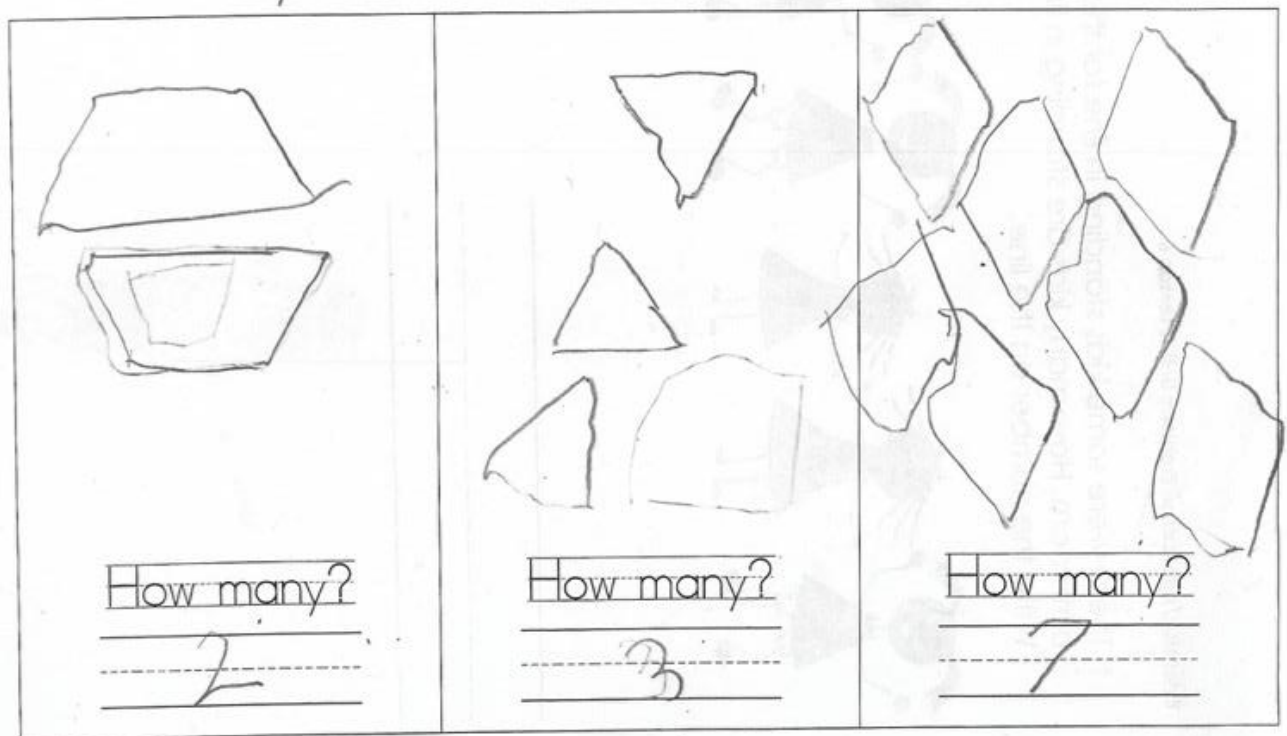


Figure B2: Adrian can use shapes to represent objects and write the correct numeral in a math activity. September, 2018.

Directions:

Write about what you like to do



Figure B3: Adrian's responds to the prompt and writes first letter sounds for some words, but has difficulty with finger spaces and capitalization. September 2018.

Directions:

Write about things you like to do.



Figure B4: Adrian's writing development as he responds to the prompt by drawing pictures, writing sentences, stretches his sounds, uses capital letters, and periods. November, 2018.

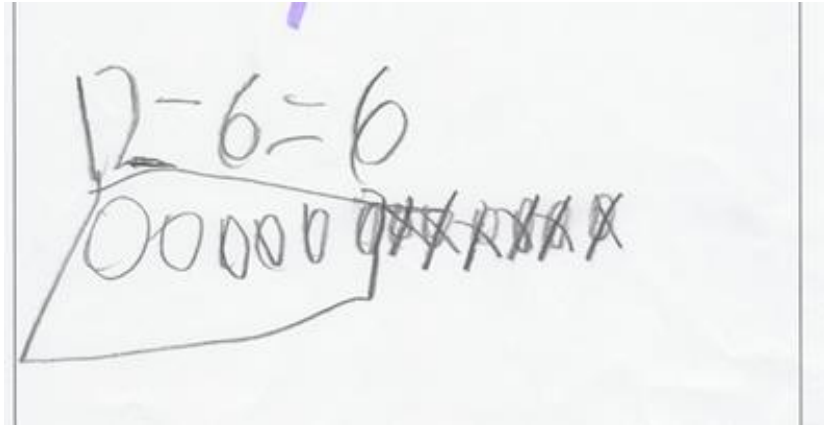


Figure B5. Adrian represents and solve this subtraction math equation with ease. March 2019

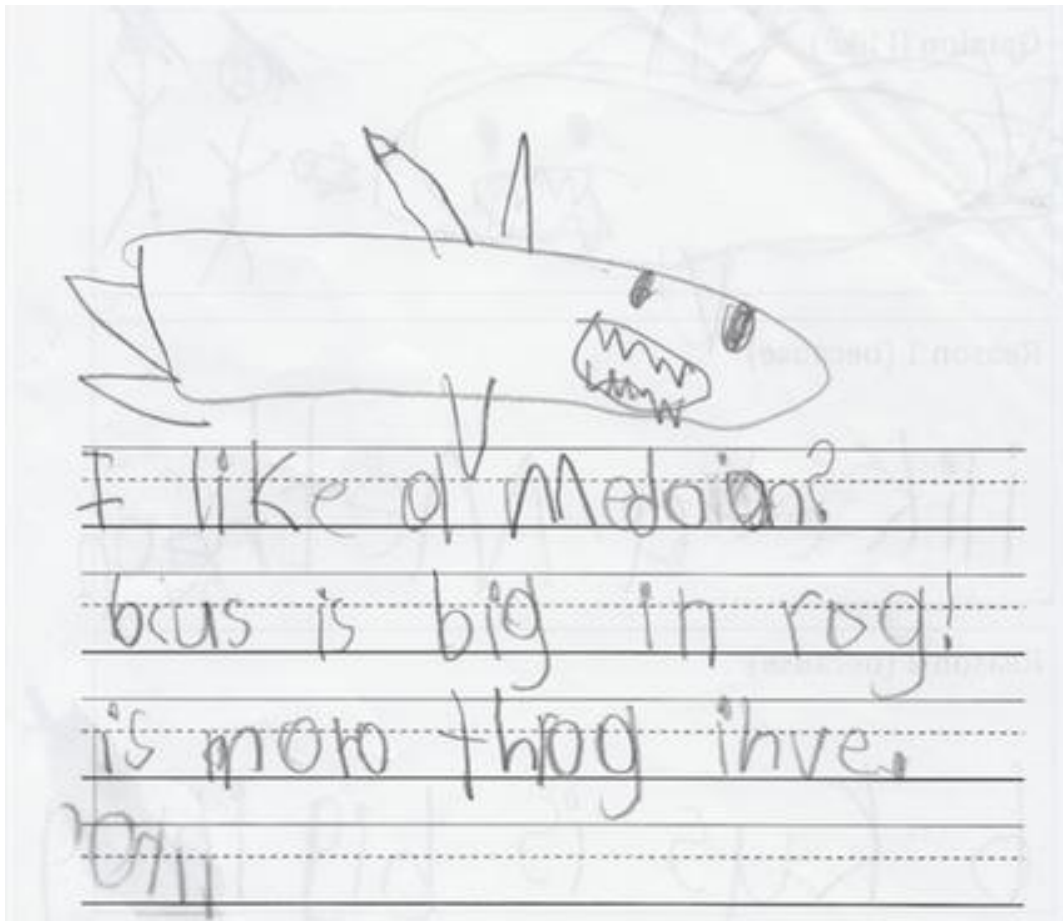


Figure B6. Adrian's response to the opinion writing, "what is your favorite animal?" January 2019.

Appendix C

Directions:

What do you like to do?

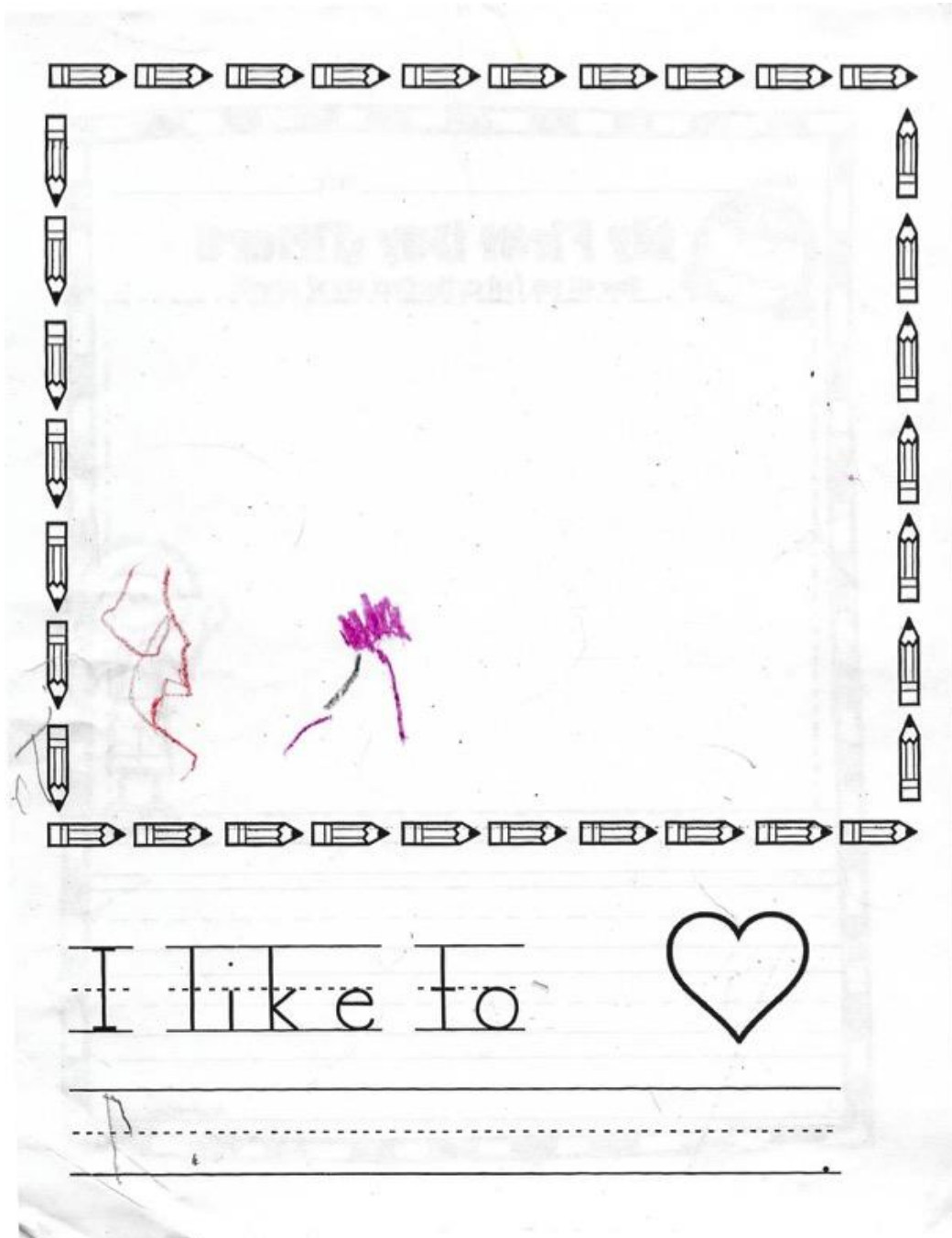


Figure C1. Work assigned the first week of school. Daniela struggled to draw a picture and could not write a sentence. September 2018.

Let's count to 20!

Counting to 20

Directions: Help the meerkat count from 1-20. Write the numbers in the boxes.

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8		
				20

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Figure C2. Number writing practice in math. Daniela can write her numbers, but struggled to complete the assignment. October 2018

Directions:

What do you like to do at home?

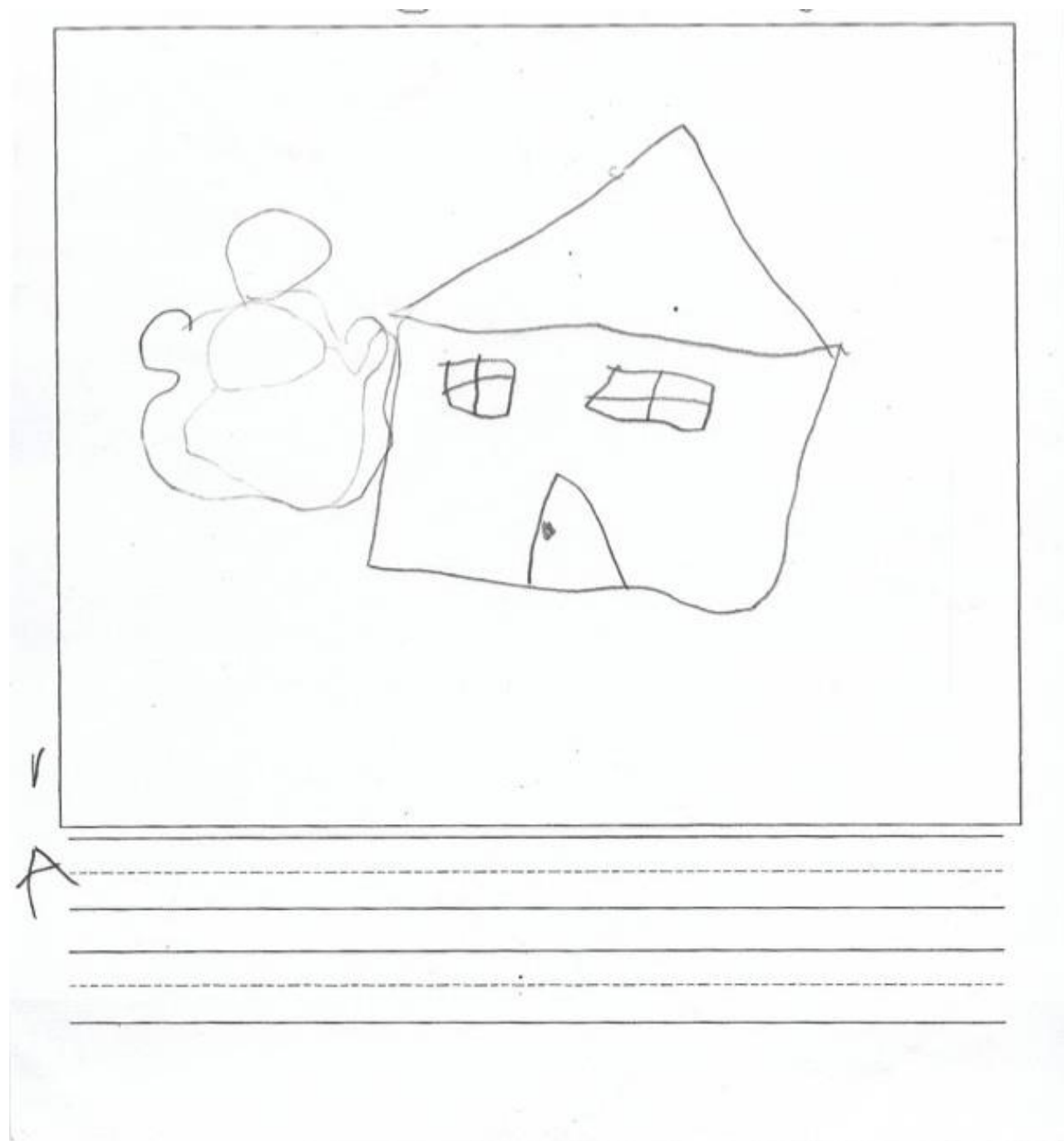


Figure C3. Daniela responds to the prompt by drawing a picture of her house and writing one letter. September 2018

Directions:

What do you like to do at home?

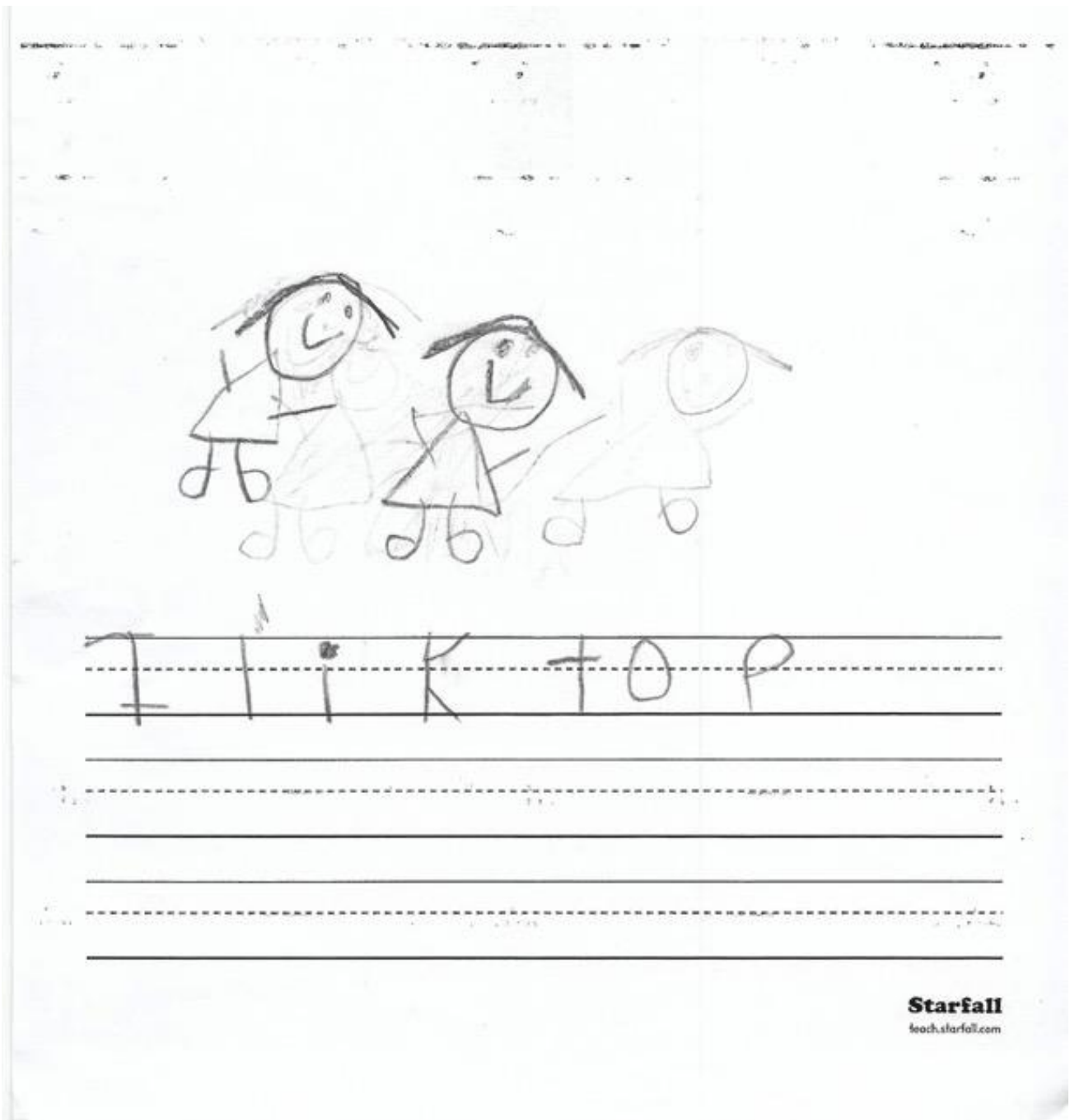


Figure C4. Daniela uses a drawing and sentence to respond to the writing prompt. She uses finger spaces, sight words, capital letters and stretches her sounds. November, 2018.

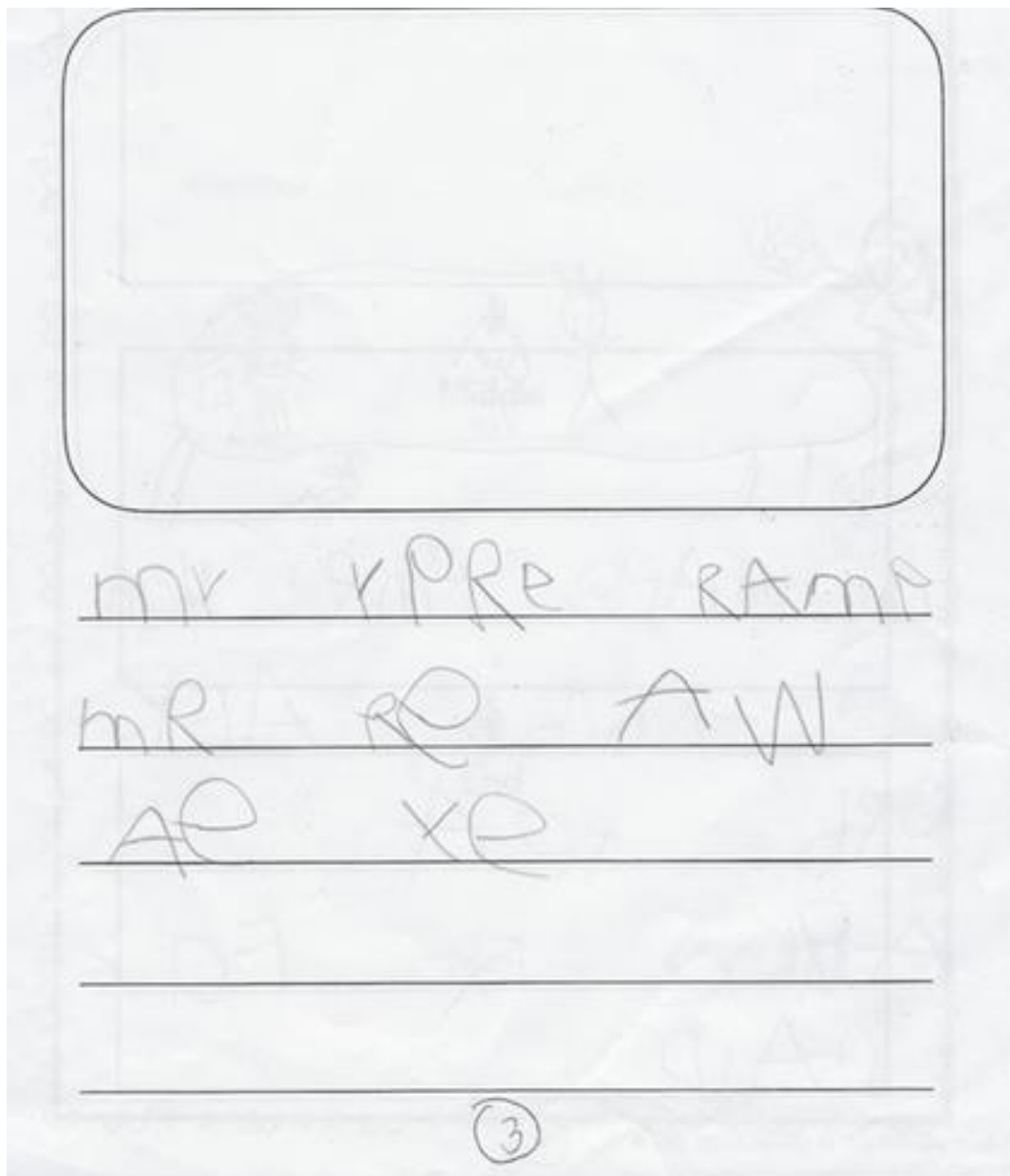


Figure C5. Writing sample from Daniela. February 2019.